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PRESENTED FOR A MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE

1985

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DATED March 8, 1985

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

"Questing Twins in John Barth's The Sot-Weed Factor and Michel Tournier's Les Météores"

by

David Jordan

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

SPRING, 1985

85-58

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Questing Twins in John Barth's The Sot-Weed Factor and Michel Tournier's Les Météores" submitted by David Jordan in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Date: March 7, 1985

ABSTRACT

The novel has its origins in the quest theme. Such early examples of the genre as Cervantes' Don Quixote or Fielding's Tom Jones describe the episodic adventures of a wandering hero, overcoming impediments in his attempt to prove his identity or regain his family estate. Following the modernist rejection of traditional forms, some authors today are returning to the classical examples set by Homer and Virgil. John Barth and Michel Tournier, in The Sot-Weed Factor and Les Météores respectively, have consciously rejected the modernist rebellion against tradition, and have returned to the traditional quest theme. Both authors also employ the twin motif to represent man's divided nature, and portray the questing hero as a twin separated from his double. In the first chapter, I discuss how authors from two distinct literary cultures--Barth in America and Tournier in France--came to choose both the quest theme and the twin motif for the third novel in each of their respective literary careers.

In the second chapter, I compare the very similar beginnings of the quest in the two novels. Both authors portray geminate unity as a Parmenidean world of timeless immobility. The third chapter describes the outside world into which each questing twin will venture. This world is defined in each novel by its individual inhabitants, including twins removed from the seclusion of geminate

unity. Both authors describe this outside world as a constantly fluctuating Heraclitean world of change and motion. The fourth chapter describes the interaction between the two world-views: in both novels, the dispaired twin attempts to impose his "Parmenidean" world-view on the "Heraclitean" outside world. It is in the outcome of the quest that the two authors differ most radically: in Les Météores, Paul succeeds in establishing his own Parmenidean world, while in The Sot-Weed Factor, Ebenezer joins the world of motion and change.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Professor Anthony Purdy for his patience and his meticulous editing. I would also like to thank all the professors in the Comparative Literature department who helped me with research and guidance, especially Professors Robberecht and Mozejko for finding the time to sit on my defense committee.

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INTRODUCTION

Michel Tournier and John Barth both have very strong ideas about the place of the contemporary novel within the history of the genre. Both reject the excesses of modernism, yet both also reject the limitations of traditional realism.[1] Nineteenth century realism and early to mid-twentieth century modernism have been effectively analysed, defined, and catalogued as historical literary movements, but as we approach our own period, it becomes difficult to formulate any such clear-cut definitions. Tournier and Barth are both highly respected in academic and literary circles, and their works can be said to represent a valid indication of where the genre may be headed in these post-modernist times. The focus of this thesis is to explore two responses to the post-modernist challenge faced by novelists today in the form of two novels: John Barth's The Sot-Weed Factor[2] and Michel Tournier's Les Météores.[3] We shall see in Chapter I that these two authors come from different backgrounds--Tournier from an education in philosophy and Barth from a more purely literary academic background--yet they find a common ground in choosing the novel as their means of expression. To find what it is about the novel that attracts these two authors, we must look back to the origins of the genre.

French critic Marthe Robert singles out Cervantes' Don Quixote as the archetypal novel, the prototype of the genre.[4] In Alonso Quijano's journey from the relative

seclusion of his home and library to the outside world, his own personal perception of reality comes into conflict with the objective, physical world. Robert refers to Cervantes' portrayal of this conflict as "the audacious, potentially revolutionary enterprise that would test life and literature against each other,"[5] and this test, she claims, is at the root of every novel. The voyaging hero of the quest story embodies the real-life conflict, experienced by every conscious individual, between, on the one hand, the personal fiction that constitutes one's perception of reality and, on the other, the contradictory objective outside world.

It could thus be argued that every novel consiitutes a quest in the broad sense of a conflict between man and the world, and it is their desire to give artistic form to their perceptions of man and the world that led both Michel Tournier and John Barth to the novel, and in particular to the quest theme. (Barth had the additional influence of such American "beat" authors of the 1950's as Ken Keasey and Jack Kerouac, in whose works the theme of travel and a search for self-knowledge is prevalent.) Even more particularly, both authors see man as a divided being, and have coupled the literary motif of twins with the quest theme to depict this division. In Les Meteores, as in The Sot-Weed Factor, an extensive study of the peculiar phenomenon of twinship serves to establish the home base or starting point of the questing hero. In both novels, this

secure base is disrupted as the twins mature, and the quest described in each novel involves the journey of one dispaired twin[6] across the world in an attempt to regain the security he had known in his childhood.

However, that is where the similarities between the two novels end. Our two authors have decidedly different ideas of how that security is to be regained (or, in allegorical terms, of how man is to find fulfilment by reconciling his personal fiction with the outside world) and these differences are reflected in the structures of the two novels. The thesis which follows is devoted to a study of how two novelists, writing at approximately the same time and handling essentially the same themes and motifs, come to such radically different conclusions in terms both of world view and of literary structure.

The first chapter of this thesis is biographical, with a particular emphasis on the concern with literary technique that led each author to the point in his career where he chose to write a novel of the traditional quest type, using the motif of twins. Chapter II describes the very similar starting points of the two questing heroes: a secure home base and a unique shared existence with a twin. The third chapter is devoted to the exterior environment into which each twin will voyage. Chapter IV describes the actual quest of each twin, and here the two contrasting thematic concerns will be brought to the foreground as we see the very different ways in which the

two questing twins reconcile themselves with the outside world. A concluding chapter attempts to resume the thematic and structural similarities and differences between The Sot-Weed Factor and Les Météores and their implications for the genre, as they are revealed through the authors' use of the quest theme and the twin motif.

I -- AUTHORS' BACKGROUNDS AND INTENTIONS

i) JOHN BARTH

John Barth has never had a career outside of teaching and writing.[1] The only deviation in his academic career was a brief one: after graduating from high school in Maryland in 1947, he went to New York to study jazz at the Julliard School of Music, and after only a few months there, he returned to Maryland to accept a scholarship at Johns Hopkins University. He retained his ambition to be a jazz musician through his first two years of studying journalism at Johns Hopkins, but in his third year Barth became, in his own words, "passionately interested in writing,"[2] and it was in that year, at the age of nineteen, that he decided that he would be a teacher and a writer. By 1952, when Barth completed his Master's degree in writing at the age of twenty-two, he had seen three of his short stories published in student journals and he had written a novel, The Shirt of Nessus, which would never be published. Barth had been teaching freshman English in his year of graduate studies, and in the fall of 1953 he took a teaching position offered to him by Pennsylvania State University--a position he would keep for the next twelve years.

Barth's novel writing career began in 1955. After spending two years working on Dorchester Tales, an intended cycle of one hundred short stories centered around Maryland's history, Barth abandoned the project and began writing The Floating Opera. He completed the novel in three months, then began his next novel in October of that same

year. His completion, only three months later, of The End of the Road marked a turning point in Barth's literary career; he had proven that his fiction could be published and had thus secured his teaching position and earned the meagre salary raise that goes along with publication, but he derived little professional recognition, almost no monetary return, and little personal gratification from his first two publications.

Barth had intended that his first three published novels would form a trilogy, but after The Floating Opera and The End of the Road, he lost interest in completing the series. His first two publications were competently executed, but did little to test Barth's creativity: they are more or less autobiographical--both describe the adventures of a man in twentieth-century Maryland--and both follow the dictates of conventional realism. It is easy to see why Barth felt as though his literary talent was threatened with stagnation, and why he set out in search of a fresh direction for his third professional novel.

His search for a new direction led Barth back to the research he had done for Dorchester Tales, and in particular to an obscure poem written by a seventeenth century settler. Having chosen Ebenezer Cooke's 1708 poem, "The Sot-Weed Factor," as his subject, Barth immediately saw a wealth of literary possibilities open up before him. In writing a prose account of the poem's action, Barth would limit himself to early eighteenth century literary

conventions, but at the same time these restrictions would allow Barth to comment indirectly on the less obvious restrictions of twentieth century literature and philosophy.

With The Sot-Weed Factor, Barth broke away from his earlier, more traditional novels, and established his own approach to the novel as a genre. He clarified that approach seven years later in a controversial essay entitled "The Literature of Exhaustion,"[3] in which he describes the 1960s as a watershed in the historical development of the novel. According to Barth, the perceived need for a break with tradition had become so prevalent among authors that literary works were being evaluated for their uniqueness, rather than on aesthetic or intellectual grounds, and the result was the near-stagnation of the genre. Barth cites examples of inartistic works passing for literature, such as: the "novel-in-a-box," random phrases printed on filing cards and collected in a box; collected descriptions of unrelated objects; and existing novels, such as Finnegan's Wake, reprinted on long roller-towels.

Barth ascribes this dearth of literary quality to the loss of what he calls:

> the most traditional notion of the artist: the Aristotelian conscious agent who achieves with technique and cunning the artistic effect; in other words, one endowed with uncommon talent, who has moreover developed and disciplined that endowment into virtuosity.[4]

Barth is no traditionalist harking back to "the good old days" of realist literature; he is merely asserting that novelty of technique should not be an end in itself. He stresses that it is inadmissible for any contemporary novelist to ignore the changes the genre has undergone since the nineteenth century:

> To be technically up to date is the least important attribute of a writer, though I would have to add that this least important attribute may be nevertheless essential. . .. A good many current novelists write turn-of-the-century novels, only in more or less mid-twentieth century language and about contemporary people and topics; this makes them considerably less interesting (to me) than excellent writers who are also technically contemporary: Joyce and Kafka, for instance, in their time, and in ours, Samuel Beckett and Jorge Luis Borges.[5]

Barth elaborates on this distinction between novelty and talent, and on the necessity of combining the two, by defining three classes of contemporary novelists:

> . . . a technically old-fashioned artist, a technically up-to-date civilian, and a technically up-to-date artist. In the first category, I'd locate all those novelists who for better or worse write not as if the twentieth century didn't exist, but as if the great writers of the last sixty years or so hadn't existed. . . . In the second category are such folk as an artist-neighbor of mine who fashions dead Winnies-the-Pooh in sometimes monumental scale out of oilcloth stuffed with sand and impaled on stakes or hung by the neck. In the third belong the few people whose artistic

> thinking is as hip as any French new-novelist's, but who manage nonetheless to speak eloquently and memorably to our still-human hearts and conditions, as the great artists have always done.[6]

This third category is what Barth aims for in his novels. He is clearly breaking away from conventional wisdom by implying that France's nouveaux romanciers are not in themselves a satisfactory response to the challenge faced by novelists today. Barth is calling for a synthesis of modern thought with traditional artistic values, and he goes on to delineate the specific attributes of modern thought that today's novelists should incorporate into their works.

Barth singles out Borges and Beckett as "two of the finest living specimens" of modern writers:

> In an age of ultimacies and 'final solutions'--at least felt ultimacies, in everything from weaponry to theology, the celebrated dehumanization of society, and the history of the novel--their work in separate ways reflects and deals with ultimacy, both technically and thematically.[7]

These two authors are ideal "specimens" not only because they treat contemporary concerns in their literature, but because they also succeed in incorporating these concerns into the very structures of their works:

> [Borges'] Labyrinths and Ficciones not only anticipate the farthest out notions of [technically up-to-date civilians]--not a difficult thing to do--but being marvelous works of art as well, illustrate in a simple way the

> difference between the fact of aesthetic ultimacies and their artistic use. What it comes down to is that an artist doesn't merely exemplify an ultimacy; he employs it.[8]

Barth has a clear vision of the task of the contemporary novelist: to "paradoxically turn the felt ultimacies of our time into material and means for his work." The task embodies a paradox because one of the "felt ultimacies" of our time is the belief in the death of the novel.

This brings us finally to Barth's own solution to the paradox faced by novelists today, which is to turn literature back upon itself: "It's about where the genre began," Barth says in "The Literature of Exhaustion," "with Ouixote imitating Amadis of Gaul, Cervantes pretending to be Cid Hamete Benengeli (and Alonso Ouijano pretending to be Don Ouixote), or Fielding parodying Richardson."[9] This idea of re-creation through imitation is crucial to Barth's theory of literature. He believes that in an age when skeptics claim that all literary possibilities have been exhausted, the most innovative approach to literature is to resurrect pre-existing literature, to give it a new existence by placing it in a contemporary context.

This is exactly what Barth did with The Sot-Weed Factor; he resurrected the eighteenth century form of the novel, and revived a 1708 poem to provide his novel with a plot. The new project posed an immense challenge. First, there was the research: Barth spent a year poring over The Maryland Archives, the official government records of the

settling of Maryland. Next, there was the problem of form; the first requisite of the eighteenth century novel is length--the typical eighteenth century novel was published in several volumes. Another requisite of the genre is complexity; in this huge novel, Barth would have to incorporate all the literary conventions of the time, which David Morrell has conveniently summarized: "a hero on a journey with a nit-wit servant for his companion, a search for one's father and one's long-lost beloved, stories told along the road, tests of virtue and manliness, encounters with bandits, bawds, noblemen, and bullies, unbelievable coincidences, abundant fornication and adultery, possible incest, and more."[10] Two years later, in April of 1958, Barth had his research catalogued on a hundred and fifty filing cards, and had a one-thousand-page rough draft outlining the novel's plot. The book was not completed until May, 1959, and was finally published a few months after Barth's thirtieth birthday, in 1960.

Discussing his sources for The Sot-Weed Factor, Barth refers to his "impulse . . . to go back to the origins of the novel and see if [he] could bring back something new."[11] This quest for the novel's origins took Barth back to the beginnings of Western literature and the epic poetry of ancient Greece. Apart from the novel's obvious reference to the classical epic (Ebenezer's composing of a "Marylandiad"), there are several less obvious, but no less intentional correspondences between The Sot-Weed Factor and

Homer's Odyssey.[12] In some instances, Barth simply borrows specific plot elements from the Odyssey; in fact, it seems at times as though Barth had gone out of his way to stretch his plot just to include some very minor events in the Greek epic. For example, the scene in which Ebenezer is washed overboard from the Poseidon, only to be swept back on deck by the next wave, has no apparent thematic function in the novel, but reflects a similar episode in The Odyssey. Barth incorporates other plot elements borrowed from Homer more smoothly into The Sot-Weed Factor; some of the coincidences Russell Miller points out include the facts that both Odysseus and Ebenezer are hampered in their journey by a bumbling traveling companion; both heroes are swamped a second time; both heroes arrrive home to find their estates overrun by the enemy--Odysseus disguised as a beggar, Ebenezer as a servant; both their journies are resolved by a woman--Athena and Joan Toast, respectively; and both heroes finally regain their estates.

It could be argued that the above borrowings from Homer merely reflect the debt of the novel as a genre to the classical epic, but Barth does more than just borrow; in some instances he raises his borrowings to the level of parody. For example: whereas Odysseus is found naked on the beach and is clothed by a king's daughter, Ebenezer is found naked in a corncrib, and is clothed by Mary Mungummory, "the traveling whore O'Dorset"(SWF,438). Similarly, when Odysseus lands on shore and is lost, Athena

informs him that he has finally arrived at famous Ithaca, but when Ebenezer washes up on the shore of Maryland he is told by an unwashed farmer that he is in "poor shitten Maryland, damn yer eyes"(SWF 318).

Finally, one cannot overlook the influence of Henry Fielding on Barth in his composition of The Sot-Weed Factor. Having decided to imitate the eighteenth century form of the novel, Barth chose Fielding's Tom Jones as a model: one of his intentions, he wrote later, "was to see if [he] couldn't make up a plot fancier than Tom Jones."[13] In this Barth succeeded, with Ebenezer Cooke replacing Tom Jones as the wandering rogue-hero. Barth surpasses Fielding with a plot so convoluted as to make the novel's structure itself a comment on the "inexhaustibility" of the genre.

We have seen that Barth is a serious author whose overriding preoccupation is with the state of the novel today. Concerned by the general outcry at the death of the novel in the 1960s and alarmed by his own perception of a stagnating genre, Barth's personal goal is to revive the novel. His solution, rather than straining for innovation, is to go back to earlier forms of the novel and to infuse these forms with contemporary thought. The result is in large part parody, as The Sot-Weed Factor parodies Tom Jones, and parody at its best is a dialectic, a coming together of new thought and old form resulting in an entirely new literary product. In The Sot-Weed Factor Barth successfully parodies an ancient form of the novel, while

at the same time treating a very modern concern with "felt ultimacies."

ii) MICHEL TOURNIER

Tournier came to the world of literature by a much less direct route than Barth.[14] After graduating from the Lycée Pasteur in Neuilly in 1946, Tournier went to Tübingen, Germany, where he spent another three years studying philosophy, this time in preparation for his agrégation. He failed the agrégation in 1949, and instead of returning to his studies to try again in another year, Tournier turned his back on the academic establishment for good. Though he places the beginning of his literary career at the particular date at which he heard of his failure of the agrégation, it was another eighteen years before he published his first novel. Tournier worked for several years as a translator, then in 1954 took a job as radio broadcaster for Europe no.1. His first novel, Vendredi ou les limbes du Pacifique, was published in 1967, when Tournier was forty-three.

Tournier's first idea for a novel came to him while he was still studying in Germany (1946-'49); fascinated by the French expatriates who had found a home in exile, and freedom in captivity, he thought of embodying the theme in

a novel, but it was a novel that had to wait until 1958 for Tournier to start writing. He began Le Roi des aulnes in that year, but then, four years later, abandoned the effort and began Vendredi ou les limbes du Pacifique, which he completed in 1966. Upon his completion of Vendredi, Tournier returned to Le Roi des aulnes, which he finally completed in 1970. Having finished the novel that he had been planning for over twenty years, Tournier was now ready to start anew.

Before discussing how this fresh beginning led Tournier to the use of the quest theme and the twin motif, it will be helpful to go back and take a closer look at the development of Tournier's approach to the genre, and at the reasons for his nearly twenty-year delay between leaving academia and the completion of his first novel.

While still at the Lycée Pasteur, Tournier and his fellow students were deeply impressed by Jean-Paul Sartre, as Tournier explains, almost to the point of idolatry:

> Un jour de l'automne 1943, un livre tomba sur nos tables, tel un météore: L'Être et le Néant de Jean-Paul Sartre. . . . Aucun doute n'était permis: un système nous était donné. Nous exultions. Tels les disciples du lycée au IVe siècle avant J.-C., ou les étudiants d'Iéna en 1805, nous avions le bonheur inouï de voir naître une philosophie sous nos yeux.[15]

This admiration for Sartre lasted nearly two years, but Tournier's adoration of the philosopher/novelist came to a

decisive end when, in October 1945, Sartre himself expounded his philosophy in person before a packed audience at the Lycée:

> Le message de Sartre tenait en quatre mots: l'existentialisme est un humanisme. Et de nous raconter une histoire de petits pois dans une boîte d'allumettes pour illustrer son propos. Nous étions atterrés. Ainsi notre maître ramassait dans la poubelle où nous l'avions enfouie cette ganache éculée, puant la sueur et la vie intérieure, l'humanisme, et il l'accolait comme également sienne à cette absurde notion d'existentialisme. 16

Though Tournier rejected existentialism early in his career, Sartre's influence cannot be discounted. The key to understanding Sartre's importance for Tournier's career lies in Tournier's own explanation of his youthful fascination with the existentialist philosopher/novelist: "un système nous était donné." Though he later rejected Sartre's "système," the notion of incorporating a philosophical system in a literary work stuck with Tournier, and is in fact today his primary goal. Tournier describes the decision he made on that day in 1949 when he embarked on his literary career:

> Donc faire oeuvre littéraire. Mais ne jamais oublier que je venais d'ailleurs, et rester dans le monde des lettres un homme d'ailleurs. Il ne fallait pas renoncer aux armes admirables que mes maîtres métaphysiciens avaient mises entre mes mains. Je prétendais bien sûr devenir

> un vrai romancier, écrire des histoires qui auraient l'odeur du feu de bois, des champignons d'automne ou du poil mouillé des bêtes, mais ces histoires devraient être secrètement mues par les ressorts de l'ontologie et de la logique matérielle.[17]

The above quotation summarizes Tournier's approach to the genre. His references to such realistic details as mushrooms and damp fur reflect his respect for his realist predecessors in the genre, while his metaphysical intentions suggest a new dimension. Tournier is an anomaly among novelists today; though he recognizes the limitations of traditional realism, he has no respect for his contemporaries who subvert traditionalism simply for the sake of subversion:

> Pour reprendre une comparaison de Paul Valéry, je prétendais faire des parties de dames avec un jeu d'échecs. Il me semble au demeurant qu'une certaine école moderne s'acharne inversement à faire des parties d'échecs avec un jeu de dames, je veux dire qu'armée des seuls outils hérités de la tradition littéraire, elle s'efforce de faire éclater les limites de la littérature pour aller, sinon plus loin, du moins ailleurs.[18]

Underlying Tournier's view of the novel as a basic form which the author raises to the level of philosophy is the structuralist distinction between deep structure and surface structure. More particularly, Lévi-Strauss's view of literature as a finite number of basic themes which can be expanded in infinite combinations is at the root of

Tournier's literary practice. Having defined his goal as "la transmutation romanesque de la métaphysique," Tournier finds his starting point in myth: "Le passage de la métaphysique au roman devait m'être fourni par le mythe."[19]

Tournier defines myth as "une histoire fondamentale,"[20] and "[u]ne histoire que tout le monde connaît déjà."[21] He refers to this conception as "le rez-de-chaussée enfantin du mythe."[22] This designation is by no means derogatory; Tournier has made use of the "infantile" level of myth by adapting one of his novels for children and writing several shorter works for young readers.[23] Tournier refers also, however, to "le sommet métaphysique"[24] of myth, and it is this that he is striving to attain in such "adult" novels as Les Météores.

This thematic development of layers of significance is where Tournier deviates formally from his realist predecessors in the genre. The linear development of plot is not nearly as important to Tournier as the hierarchical, or "vertical" thematic development. Thus, while there may be certain lapses in the space-time continuum in Tournier's created worlds, there is a remarkable fugue-like development which culminates in an intricate meshing of apparently diverse themes; in each novel, themes merge to form a closed system. In discussing his composition of Le Roi des aulnes, Tournier expresses his admiration for Johann Sebastian Bach's perfection of the fugue structure, and explains how he applies Bach's structure to novel-

writing:

> [Bach] pose les quatre mesures de son sujet, courte et déchirante mélodie dont la simplicité diamantine va mystérieusement s'épanouir en corne d'abondance. . .. Partant du thème phorique--simple comme le simple geste de poser un enfant sur son épaule--j'ai essayé d'édifier une architecture romanesque par un déploiement purement technique empruntant ses figures succesives à une logique profonde. La phorie prend racine dans l'Adam archaïque, puis se développe, s'inverse, se déguise, se réfracte, s'exaspère--phorie, antiphorie, superphorie, hyperphorie, etc.--toujours couverte par le léger manteau de la psychologie et de l'histoire.[25]

Having rejected existentialism, Tournier's self-imposed task was to develop a better "système." The philosophical system Tournier espoused early in his career, and which still permeates his works, is in fact in certain respects the polar opposite of existentialism. Tournier's philosophy divides the history of thought into two polarities, which he defines (through the voice of one of his characters--not an uncommon practice with Tournier[26]) in the following terms:

> Depuis l'aube la plus lointaine de l'humanité occidentale, deux courants se croisent et s'opposent, dominés l'un par Parménide d'Élée, l'autre par Héraclite d'Éphèse. Pour Parménide la réalité et la vérité se fondent dans l'Être immobile, massif et identitaire. Cette vision figée fait horreur à l'autre penseur, Héraclite, qui voit dans le feu tremblant et

> grondant le modèle de toutes les choses, et dans le courant limpide d'une eau chantante le symbole de la vie perpétuellement créatrice. L'ontologie et la métaphysique--le repos en l'Être et le dépassement de l'Être--dressent l'une contre l'autre depuis toujours deux sagesses et deux spéculations. . . .[27]

Tournier's novels all illustrate the interplay of these two tendencies, both on the level of character (Robinson/Vendredi in his first novel, Paul and Jean in Les Météores) and on the level of theme (nomad and sedentary, endogamy and exogamy, etc.). Moreover, it is on the level of literary structure that the dichotomy becomes most interesting and that we see Tournier's ultimate preference for being rather than becoming, for Parmenides rather than Heraclitus. It is not surprising, then, that Tournier would eventually turn to the quest theme for one of his novels. In its most basic form--its "rez de chaussée"--the quest is the story of a closed circuit: the hero's voyage is a round-trip, from home to the outside, and back home again. Tournier was inspired in his initial conception of Les Météores by a particular adaptation of the quest theme: Jules Verne's Around the World in Eighty Days. Tournier had initially planned that the twins of Les Météores, like Passepartout and Phileas Fogg, would undertake a complete circumnavigation of the globe. The plot changed considerably in the writing, though, so that finally Paul would travel only halfway around the world in pursuit of his twin, and retrace his journey back home to France.

It is easy to see now how the twin motif has a natural attraction for Tournier. Since he perceives the world as bipolar, divided between existentialists and metaphysicians, the phenomenon of twins--a single soul divided between two existences--provides a natural illustration for Tournier's perception of a divided world. When beginning Les Météores, Tournier knew that he had found "une histoire fondamentale" in the twin motif because every time he mentioned the subject of his projected novel, recognition was immediate: "Ah yes," friends would respond. "Have you heard about the twin in Rome who sneezes every time his brother in London catches a cold?" This, or some similarly familiar anecdote, indicated that the twin motif is in fact a story that "tout le monde connaît déjà." It was upon this "rez-de-chaussée" that Tournier would construct his metaphysical system in Les Météores.

* * *

Both Tournier and Barth rose to literary prominence at a time when the novel had reached an impasse. In France, Tournier perceived le nouveau roman as the death of the novel ("Et je dis non! Non aux romanciers nés dans le sérail et qui en profitent pour casser la baraque!")[28] while in the U.S., Barth was appalled at the trickery that was passing for literature under the guise of "modern art." Both authors refused to follow the current trends, and with

the two novels discussed here, they confronted the modern dilemma head on.

Barth's solution is to turn literature back upon itself, to resurrect a historical form through parody. By resurrecting the eighteenth century picaresque form, Barth went back to the story-telling origins of the novel, and exaggerated the traditional plot structure to the level of absurdity. Tournier finds his own solution to the literary impasse in myth; he goes back to the very origins of story-telling to isolate universal themes, which he layers in a vertical, fugue-like structure. Barth revives the genre in The Sot-Weed Factor by exaggerating the traditional horizontal development of plot to absurdity, while Tournier offers an alternative to horizontal plot development with his vertical layering of basic themes.

II -- SHARED BEGINNINGS: GEMINATE UNITY AS THE QUEST'S STARTING POINT

In the quest myth, the first stage of the hero's life represents the secure base from which the hero departs, and to which he returns to claim as his own after his voyage of initiation. This home base is more than just a geographic location; traditionally, the hero's castle or kingdom also symbolizes a psychological state of self-knowledge, secured only after he has proven himself in the outside world. In Homer's Odyssey, this home base was represented by Odysseus' palace in Ithaca, his family (wife, father, and son), and his faithful servants. This home base was a fairly universal symbol--a situation that any well-bred Greek male would aspire to.

In Les Météores and The Sot-Weed Factor, on the other hand, the home base is a much more privileged sanctuary, reserved only for those with the rare fortune to be born as twins. Both Ebenezer and Paul (the protagonists of The Sot-Weed Factor and Les Météores respectively) are set apart from the outside world not by the walls of a castle, but by the peculiar bond of geminate unity each shares with his twin. As a literary device, this geminate unity serves to clarify and emphasize the distinction between home (interior, or psychological security) and outside (the exterior proving ground). The home base in these two novels is clearly a state of existence, rather than a geographic location. It is the geminate bond that separates each hero

from the outside world, and it is the rupture of that bond that initiates the adventures of the two heroes.

With the wealth of data (both folkloric and scientific) available on the phenomenon of twins (which Tournier studied diligently for five years, and of which Barth has some first-hand knowledge, having a twin sister), it is not surprising that both novelists portray similar home bases in the childhoods of their questing heroes. Ebenezer and Paul are isolated from the outside world in their childhoods, not only physically, but also by the intangible bond of geminate unity. Ebenezer and Paul are eventually driven away from their childhood sanctuaries to face the challenges of the world of non-twin individuals; the conflict embodied in their respective quests will be more clearly apparent if we first look at the specific attributes of the common ground of the two novels, the heroes' home base in geminate unity.

In Les Météores, La Cassine[1] is not exactly a fortified castle--workers come and go daily, and visitors are frequent--but the twins' separation from the outside world is nevertheless apparent from the outset. Paul is aware at an early age that he and his brother are an anomaly; like sideshow freaks, the twins are exhibited to strangers. Jean and Paul use the term "le cirque" to describe "ce triste manège qui se répétait avec chaque visiteur, commençait par des exclamations de surprise provoquées par notre ressemblance et se prolongeait par le

jeu des comparaisons, des substitutions, des confusions"(LM,164). Later, Paul concludes that he and Jean, like "les innocents" of St. Brigitte's, formed "une tribu à part, obéissant à d'autres lois que les autres hommes"(LM,163).

In The Sot-Weed Factor, the twins' seclusion is enhanced by physical isolation. Within the confines of the home grounds, there simply are no visitors. Up to the age of eighteen, neither Ebenezer nor Anna has any reason to transgress the boundaries of the family estate: they have each other for companionship, they have maids and servants to provide the necessities of food and clothing, and their father even hires a tutor for their education. (The tutor, Henry Burlingame, does provide an exception to the twins' seclusion from outsiders and plays a key role, acting as initiator to the ways of the outside world for Ebenezer, and as surrogate twin for Anna, but Burlingame's thematic significance remains to be discussed in a later chapter.)

In the opening pages of Les Météores, a passing reference to the twins asleep posits innocence as the very basis of their unity: "Le sommeil restitue cette innocence originelle dans laquelle ils se confondent"(LM,12). However, Paul has a very specific definition of innocence which applies only to twins. His theory is that all people are conceived as twins, and that those born without doubles have eaten their twin in the womb. According to Paul, non-twins are born cannibals; they are naturally war-like,

and are responsible for "la cascade de violences et de crimes qui s'appelle l'Histoire"(LM, 196). "Nous seuls," Paul explains to his brother, "nous sommes venus au monde la main dans la main, et le sourire fraternel aux lèvres"(LM, 196).

Paul and Jean have a natural affinity with "les innocents," the retarded children at St. Brigitte's. (Tournier's love of word-play is evident here.) Perhaps the key to this natural affinity is the secret language shared by the twins and "les innocents," which Sister Beatrice compares to "la langue originelle" spoken by Adam and Eve before their loss of innocence. Jean and Paul go on to develop their secret language, which they call "l'éolien" (language of the wind) until it surpasses the capabilities of any natural language.

In The Sot-Weed Factor, innocence is defined entirely in sexual terms. Sexual virginity is one value which Ebenezer places above all others in his ensuing adventures, and there is a suggestion in the novel's early chapters that the continued virginity of each twin is in fact the very basis of their extraordinary bond. When Anna and Ebenezer meet in London just prior to Ebenezer's voyage to America, Anna is sure that Ebenezer has lost his virginity; when she learns that she is mistaken, she embraces her brother. "I had come to think we no longer knew each other," she weeps, "but it may be I was mistaken" (SWF,127). There are continued references to sexuality

throughout the novel--to the possibility of incest and of sexual relations with outsiders--but the suggestion here is that as long as the twins maintain their sexual innocence, they maintain their geminate bond.

In Les Météores, it is Jean's "normal" (or heterosexual) attraction for women (or girls) that breaks up the geminate cell. Tournier's literal interpretation of the hetero prefix (from the Greek, meaning "other, different") explains the cohesive bond of geminate sexuality in both novels. Similarly, Tournier uses homosexuality in the strict sense of sexuality between the same individuals--so that homosexuality is merely an imperfect approximation of twin-to-twin sexuality. Paul contrasts the perfect unity of the geminate bond with the open-ended dialectic of heterosexuality in mathematical terms: his "formule identitaire" describes the self-perpetuating unity of the geminate cell (Jean + Paul = Jean-Paul); while the"formule dialectique" implies open-ended lawlessness (Edouard + Maria-Barbara = Jean + Paul + Peter. . .)(LM,279). Geminate unity remains in the realm of mythical perfection only so long as twins confine their sexuality to each other; sexual contact outside the geminate cell sets in motion the dialectic of procreation.

In The Sot-Weed Factor, geminate sexuality takes on another dimension; because they are male and female, Ebenezer and Anna's sexual intimacy more closely resembles procreating non-twin sexuality. Nevertheless, the sexual

relation between the twins remains as sterile (and therefore as "innocent") as that between Jean and Paul. The sexual bond between Ebenezer and Anna is implied by the jealous reaction of each at the mere mention of the other's infidelity; that they were indeed sexually intimate in their childhood is indicated clearly in the exchange between Ebenezer and Burlingame in a Cambridge winehouse: "A little growth or mole she hath," Burlingame taunts Ebenezer, "ye who know her so well, I need not mention where. . ." "I scarce need mention that most fetching game of all," Burlingame continues, "the one she plays when other pleasures fail--have ye remarked it? I mean the game she calls Heavenly Twins"(SWF,437). Despite the added implications, sterile sex between twins in The Sot-Weed Factor provides the same contrast with procreating non-twin sex as it does in Les Météores: as Ebenezer explains, they "preferred each other's company to the concupiscent world's"(SWF,530).

Inherent in the "homo"-sexuality of twins is their immunity to the passage of time. By refusing to take part in the dialectic of procreation, twins remain unaltered by the passing years. Paul feels that he and his twin are above "la cascade de violences et de crimes qui s'appelle l'Histoire"; that they are actually physically immune to the ageing process is suggested by repeated references to their unusually youthful appearance prior to their separation. The double-fetus position that the twins

assume every night symbolizes a return to the timeless state preceding birth, and for Paul this sleeping position is a conscious effort to remain outside time: "cette position manifeste notre détermination à ne pas nous engager dans la dialectique du temps et de la vie"(LM, 387).

In The Sot-Weed Factor, the twins' immunity to the passage of time is implicit in the static world they inhabit; it isn't until after their separation that either of the twins even realises that time exists. It is after their first separation (which lasts just one day) that Anna feels the effects of time: "'twas my first whole day apart from you," she exclaims, "I felt ten years older for the day's adventure"(SWF, 127). Similarly, it comes as a major revelation to Ebenezer, several months after his separation from Anna, that "time passes for the living. . . and alters things. Only for the dead do circumstances never change"(SWF, 655). This revelation in fact sums up the thematic significance of Ebenezer's voyage; how he arrives at it is the subject of a later chapter.

Another characteristic of the heroes' origins that adds to their separation from the outside world is the order, and even the rituals, of the life each shares with his twin. In Les Météores, the rigid order of the geminate world is reflected in the nightly "purification" ritual during which the twins retrieve their geminate bond by cleansing each other of any foreign influences that they

have accumulated during the day. This ritual maintains a system "d'une rigidité absolue," with "aucune possibilité . . . d'adaptation souple à une situation inédite"(LM, 415). There are no such rituals among the twins in The Sot-Weed Factor, but the description of their reunion after their first day's separation suggests that the world of Anna and Ebenezer is just as inhospitable to unplanned events. In her attempt to eradicate the foreign influences that she was subjected to during that day in London, Anna tries desperately to share every moment of that day with Ebenezer: "We talked of nothing else for weeks but that day, and still I'd remember trifles I'd forgot to tell you"(SWF,127).

Finally, the one value essential to maintaining their original security is immobility. It is only when the hero is forced into motion that the geminate bond is broken, and his voyage of initiation begins. The trials faced by each twin in the outside world constitute the quest of each novel, and it is here that the two authors diverge from their common starting point. Before describing the actual conflict between each twin and his environment, it will be helpful to examine how each author defines the external environment into which the twin ventures.

III -- THE OUTSIDE WORLD: INDIVIDUALS

The exterior environment into which the hero of each novel journeys is not a world of gods, giants, and monsters, as in The Odyssey, but a world that conforms to our perception of reality. By contrasting this exterior reality with the geminate world of absolutes--timelessness, innocence, and immobility--both authors portray a landscape no less life-threatening than the environment of the classical epic.

In both novels, the outside world is defined by its non-twin inhabitants. Each hero joins the world of "singles" as a particular species of individual, the dispaired twin. Though knowledge of his previous existence in the ideal world of twinship does set each hero apart from the world he encounters, the rupture of the geminate union leaves each protagonist to face the world on its own terms, as an individual. The very different ways in which each questing twin reconciles the two conflicting worlds is the subject of the next chapter; the purpose of this chapter is to set the scene for the actual quests by describing the exterior environment in both novels, as represented by the characters, including the dispaired twins, who live outside the seclusion of geminate unity.

I) THE INDIVIDUAL IN THE SOT-WEED FACTOR

Ebenezer comes from a world of absolutes, and nearly every character he encounters in the outside world warns him that his vision of a static world is not suited to the vicissitudes of reality, from John McEvoy's "The world's a tangled skein, and all is knottier than ye take it for," to Joan Toast's warning that "Things are not what they seem, Mr. Cooke" (SWF, pp.69 and 504). The most persistent spokesman for the chaotic state of the real world is Ebenezer's tutor and guide, Henry Burlingame III, who occupies a central position both structurally and thematically in The Sot-Weed Factor.

Burlingame is crucial to the plot in that he educates the twins in their childhood, guides Ebenezer through his voyage, and finally effects sexual union with Anna, thereby completing the integration of the twins with the outside world. He serves as a surrogate twin to both Ebenezer and Anna and a link with the outside world, yet is clearly an anomaly in both the geminate and the exterior worlds. At the same time, as a spiritual guide leading Ebenezer from geminate seclusion to the outside world, Burlingame seems to be in possession of privileged information concerning both worlds. His role throughout Ebenezer's voyage is to act as initiator to the outside world, and as such he acts as a representative of that world. A closer look at Burlingame's character, as defined by Barth's narrator,

shows that he is chaos and mutability incarnate. Perhaps the best summary of Burlingame's world view comes in his lesson to Ebenezer at about the mid-point of the novel:

> [Man] is by mindless lust engendered and by mindless wrench expelled, from the Eden of the womb to the motley, mindless world. He is Chance's fool, the toy of aimless Nature--a mayfly flitting down the winds of chaos! (SWF,372)

The world of The Sot-Weed Factor, with all its contradictions and convolutions, confirms Burlingame's observation that "The very universe is naught but change and motion" (SWF,138).

If we look at Burlingame's life history, two differences between the life of Henry Burlingame and the life of the twins are immediately apparent: Burlingame's life is neither sedentary nor secluded. In his half-dozen trans-Atlantic voyages, Burlingame associates with sailors, gypsies, scholars, spies, farmers, and Indians. What is more, Burlingame's hyper-sexuality, his physical intimacy with everyone and everything from Sir Isaac Newton to Portia, Timothy Mitchell's pig, represents the opposite of the twins' virginity. Whereas the twins' continued harmony together depends on each remaining "consistently no special sort of person" (SWF,12), Burlingame will adopt and discard any identity that proves expedient to his immediate goals. During the course of Ebenezer's eleven-month journey from

London to Malden, Burlingame adopts no fewer than six different identities (in addition to his own): he is at various times Lord Baltimore, Peter Sayer, John Coode, Timothy Mitchell, Nicholas Lowe, and even Ebenezer Cooke. The instability of Burlingame's identity has broader implications for the world at large; as Burlingame suggests to Ebenezer, "Your true and constant Burlingame exists only in your fancy, as doth the pointed order of the world" (SWF,357).

If, as Burlingame sugests, "the very universe is naught but change and motion" (SWF,138), then he and the twins present two very different ways of reconciling man's inherent need for stability within the "Heraclitean flux" of the world: the twins simply remain aloof from time's inconstancy in their own secluded world, and Burlingame launches himself headlong into the fluctuating world, surviving only through his adaptability. Burlingame recognizes man's need for constancy, as indicated by his advice to Ebenezer:

> One must make and seize his soul, and then cleave fast to't, or go babbling in the corner; one must choose his gods and devils on the run, quill his own name upon the universe, and declare ''tis I, and the world stands such a way!' One must assert, assert, assert, or go screaming mad. (SWF,373)

But Burlingame also realizes the limitations of such subjective assertions. He goes on to advise Ebenezer that:

> despite the shifting lights we appear in . . . you must embrace yourself as poet and virgin, regardless, or discard it for something better. . . .. In either case, don't seek whole understanding--the search were fruitless. (SWF,374: underlining mine)

Burlingame agrees with Ebenezer that man creates his own individuality through his memory: "'tis the house of identity, the soul's dwelling place"(SWF,139), but the key to Burlingame's adaptability is his belief in the flexibility of this "dwelling place." Burlingame demonstrates the fallibility of memory in a conversation with Ebenezer during their overnight coach trip to Plymouth. When Burlingame reminds his companion of a day the two had spent together in London several years previously, the two disagree as to the kind of wine they drank that day; Burlingame concludes the argument by observing that whether it was Madeira or Malaga that they drank, "the fact is that where memories disagree, there's oft no means to settle the dispute" (SWF,139). This apparently idle observation sums up the central theme of The Sot-Weed Factor. Burlingame expands the implications of man's inconstancy from the identity of the individual to embrace the history of the whole world: "there is a temper wont to twist the past into a theaterpiece," he observes, to "mistake the reasonable for the historical" (SWF,145). Barth elaborates on this theme, expanding its implications from the arbitrary identity of the individual to the history of Maryland, and ultimately to our perception of

reality.

Just as nearly every individual becomes someone other than he or she appears to be (Bertrand is transformed from master to servant; Billy Rumbly from savage to gentleman; Anna from lady to savage; etc.), so the recorded history of Maryland that Barth encountered in his research of The Maryland Archives becomes merely pretext for an intricate subterfuge in which Coode and Lord Baltimore exchange places as hero and villain, thereby undermining any notion of "ultimacy" or permanence. In the second stage of Ebenezer's quest--his journey to Malden--Barth sets up a clash between two absolutes: Ebenezer's ideal, static world, and Burlingame's perpetual flux. Before Ebenezer embarks on his voyage, though, he goes through a ten-year preparation, and it is these ten years that define the place of the displaced twin in the exterior world. During this decade, Ebenezer belongs to neither the geminate world nor the outside world; he merely exists passively, caught between the two.

Ebenezer is expelled from the seclusion of his family estate and is separated from Anna at the age of eighteen, and his journey to Malden does not begin until Ebenezer is nearly twenty-eight. In the ten intervening years, Ebenezer is in limbo. No longer protected by the timeless unity of the geminate world, yet unable to adapt to the exterior world, he gets the worst of both. Ebenezer remains secluded and immobile but, no longer protected from the passage of

time, he feels the effects of ageing, and is aware of a mounting pressure to partake in the dialectic of time and space.

Ebenezer makes two false starts at integrating his life with the outside world. The first is a three-year stay at Cambridge University, where he attempts to exchange the security of home for the seclusion of Cambridge's academic world, taking part in few pranks or sports, and making few friends (SWF,10), but finding a substitute for geminate seclusion in fiction, reading such works of fantasy as Esquemeling's History of the Buccaneers. However, the world of fiction is not sufficient protection from the outside world; after three years, Ebenezer fails his exams and is expelled from his academic sanctuary.

Faced with this disruption of his immobility and seclusion, Ebenezer at last recognizes time's passage and the limits of the lifetime of the individual:

> 'Ah God,' he wrote in a letter to Anna about this time, 'it were an easy matter to choose a calling, had one all Time to live in! I should be fifty Years a Barrister, fifty a Physician, fifty a Clergyman, fifty a Soldier! Aye and fifty a Thief, and fifty a Judge! . . . All Trades, all Crafts, all Professions are wondrous, but none is finer than the rest together. I cannot choose, sweet Anna . . . (SWF,11-12).

The relentless passage of time in the outside world reduces Ebenezer to absolute immobility while the world continues

to change around him:

> Finally one day he did not deign even to dress himself or eat, but sat immobile in the window seat in his nightshirt and stared at the activity in the street below, unable to choose a motion at all even when, some hours later, his untutored bladder suggested one. (SWF,12)

Ebenezer is rescued, at least temporarily, from his immobility by the return of his childhood tutor. When Burlingame rouses Ebebnezer with tales of his own adventures, concluding with the advice that "We are dying men, Ebenezer, there's time for naught but bold resolves!" (SWF,27-28), Ebenezer is inspired--if not to throw himself headlong into life's passing current, at least to follow Burlingame as far as London.

Ebenezer's next decision is made for him by his father, who has a very definite idea of Ebenezer's place in the world: Andrew Cooke's advice is to "have done with this flitting hither and yon and commence to carry a man's portion like a man"(SWF,36). This advice propels Ebenezer as far as London and the accounting desk at Peter Paggen, merchant, where he is supposedly preparing himself for the life of plantation owner. However, we soon learn that "[t]his course of life was not one that Ebenezer would have chosen for himself"(SWF,43), and he soon relapses into stagnation behind the accounting desk. Ebenezer makes a few half-hearted attempts during the next six years to choose

some sort of calling that will launch him into the exterior world: he tries his hand at poetry, but "abandon[s] the effort each time for want of anything to write about" (SWF,31), and he even tries periodically to make something of his accounting career--"there were occasions when he managed to do his work satisfactorily, even intelligently for several weeks running"(SWF,48)--but nothing comes of his sporadic diligence.

Late in his twenty-eighth year, Ebenezer is a model of living death: still clinging to his sedentary values, yet divorced from the sanctuary of geminate unity, he is caught between two worlds. He cannot go back to the geminate world of his childhood, so the only solution is to find a way of integrating himself with the world around him. The solution comes to him quite suddenly on the evening of March 25, 1694, when as the result of a barroom wager Ebenezer discovers an identity for himself and a moral purpose, both of which will launch him into the world of motion and change.

His encounter with Joan Toast represents Ebenezer's first real contact with the outside world, and Barth manipulates the narration by hinting that the narrator is not entirely objective, that his "omniscience"" is in fact limited to Ebenezer's perception. The incident begins in Lockett's Pub, where "the pert girl work[s] some queer attraction in him, call[s] forth a spark from the vacuum of his character"(SWF,53). This "attraction" would of course

seem "queer" only to Ebenezer; to the average reader, it is not at all unusual that this "pert girl," who had been described as "all spirit, imagination, and brave brown eyes, small-framed, large-breasted, and tight-skinned" (SWF,49), should excite Ebenezer. As the episode is narrated, Ebenezer is appalled at her story of the abuse she has suffered and he refuses to debase Joan further by paying for her sexual favours. Reading through the irony, however, the reader can infer that Ebenezer is tempted by fleshly desire to break out of his twenty-eight year seclusion, but is too weak-willed to take advantage of the opportunity to divest himself of his virginity. Ebenezer's misinterpretation of his own sexual desire continues until he has constructed an entire identity for himself based on his virtuous refusal to debase this "goddess":

> Faith, 'tis a rare man knows who he is;
> had I not stod firm with Joan Toast, I
> might well ne'er have discovered that
> knowledge! What am I? What am I?
> Virgin, sir! Poet, sir! I am a virgin
> and a poet. (SWF,64)

Ebenezer brandishes this constructed identity as a shield from the outside world, and Barth's irony is clear from the outset: Ebenezer is clearly no poet ("he . . . endeavoured on several occasions to write poems, but abandoned the effort each time for want of anything to write about"(SWF,31)), and the implication is that his virginity is just as ineffectual as his poetry in warding off threats

to his timeless seclusion.

Our discussion of Burlingame, Ebenezer, and the relation between the two provides an overview of the place of the individual in the world, as portrayed in The Sot-Weed Factor. With this overview in mind, we can now pause to consider the thematic relevance of an important distinction that has only been touched on in passing: the conflict not only between interior and exterior worlds, but also that between male and female.

In The Sot-Weed Factor, the chaos of the world is symbolized by the sexual division of humanity into man and woman. Burlingame points out that Aristophanes "maintained that male and female are displaced moities of an ancient whole, and wooing [is] but their vain attempt at union"(SWF,528). The attempt at reconciling the two "moities" is indeed vain in the world represented in Barth's novel: the union of Anna's and Ebenezer's parents ends with the death of Anne Bowyer Cooke at the twins' birth; Burlingame's parents are separated by death when his mother throws herself on a spear; Mary Mungummory and Charley Mattisin's union ends with the hanging death of Mattisin; Wilhelm Tick and Katie Mungummory are both murdered; and Roxanne Russecks' marriage comes to an abrupt end when Harvey Russecks' head is cracked open on a mill stone. Of the prominent characters in The Sot-Weed Factor, only four do not overtly belong to this "vain attempt at union": the two dispaired twins, Henry Burlingame, and Joan

Toast. (Anna and Ebenezer finally unite, but in spite of their attempts to deny such a union.)

Anna and Ebenezer serve as a model of the entire world: together they form a peaceful whole, while apart their lives are chaos. They were united in the womb, their union weakens as they mature, and the only way they can find peace is to reunite as adults. Each twin is subconsciously aware of this truth, and the progress of the novel is the story of their overcoming the social and psychological barriers to the truth. Ebenezer is more resistant to the truth than Anna is; his flight to Malden is in fact a flight from truth. His journey is a voyage of initiation in that he is in search of fulfilment; however, the solution to his quest is literally staring him in the face at the moment of his departure: "Thou art a catch for the best of men" Ebenezer says to his sister upon boarding the coach for Plymouth. "Could I find your equal, I'd be neither virgin nor bachelor for long!"(SWF,128)

What he does find on his journey is Joan Toast, to whom he nearly loses his virginity on two separate occasions. Ebenezer is in fact merely forestalling the inevitable by transferring his love for Anna to Joan Toast, and this truth surfaces in brief flashes of insight when his psychological defenses are down. At one point, Ebenezer himself remarks that Anna "is more twin to Joan Toast than she is to me," and again his association of the two women comes near the surface when we read that "the image of

Joan Toast had somehow got blurred with that of Burlingame, on the one hand, and his own cause merged with Anna's on the other"(SWF,513). Despite these near-revelations, Ebenezer stubbornly refuses to accept his inevitable union with Anna.

Anna's insight is much keener than Ebenezer's: though both may be deluded as to their intentions, while Ebenezer flees their union, it is Anna who sets off to reunite with her brother. Though she satisfies her new-found sexual desire with Burlingame during her adolescence, the true object of her desire is Ebenezer: "I pleased her in no wise save as your proxy," Burlingame explains to Ebenezer (SWF,529). Later Anna is aware of her innate desire for Ebenezer, but she is torn between that desire and social taboos against incest; while the two are in London, several years before Ebenezer's departure for Maryland, Anna declares that "the man I love best hath the bad sense to be my brother"(SWF,32). While Ebenezer is off on his Quixotic quest, Anna is left behind at St. Giles where, according to Burlingame, she "repines . . . for the dark identity the twins shared in the womb, and for the well-nigh fetal closeness of their childhood"(SWF,528). Even though she herself may not be conscious of her motivation, it is in order to rejoin her twin that Anna sets out for Maryland: "'twas this union Anna desired with all her heart," Burlingame explains to Ebenezer: "howe'er her mind disguise it, 'tis this hath brought her halfway round the

globe to seek you out"(SWF,536).

If Ebenezer and Anna represent the classical perception of two halves uniting to form a perfect whole, Burlingame and Joan Toast represent the modernist denial of any such symmetrical perfection in nature. Burlingame and Joan are the only two characters who are not involved in the "vain" attempt to find an enduring sexual bond. Their sexuality is instead directed toward the world at large: Burlingame's sexual conquests range from Sir Isaac Newton to Portia, Timothy Mitchell's pig; Joan has sexual relations with everyone from the patrons of Lockett's Pub to a shipful of pirates, to nearly the entire male population of Maryland.

Burlingame explains his concupiscence as the desire to be the embracer of totality, and the twins play a symbolic role in that desire:

> . . . I crave the Whole--the tenon in the mortise, the jointure of polarities, the seamless universe--whereof you twain are token, in coito! (SWF,537)

Burlingame's desire to embrace "the whole" is symbolized by his physical desire to embrace the twins. Just as he wishes to embrace "the jointure of the polarities," his fantasy is to find Anna and Ebenezer locked in incestuous union, and embrace the two of them:

> Haply the day will come when Anna's secret lust will get the better of her

> reason and your own likewise. . . if such a day dawn, why then perchance I'll come upon you sack a sack as did Catallus on the lovers, and like that nimble poet pin you to your work--nay, skewer you both like twin squabs on a spit! (SWF,530)

Burlingame, then, represents the chaotic world and his desire to embrace the twins foreshadows the novel's thematic conclusion--Anna and Ebenezer will be united, but not in a timeless womb-like state. Their respective quests will find their conclusions when Anna and Ebenezer are united as two ordinary lovers, raising the child that Burlingame begat on Anna.

II)--THE INDIVIDUAL IN LES MÉTÉORES

Like Barth, Tournier describes an instability inherent in the individual that derives from an innate sexual need. However, in Les Météores, the solution is not as simple as finding harmony in the traditional union of male and female. Every character in Les Météores is striving to attain the harmonious existence that Jean and Paul knew in their childhood, and there is a clear-cut hierarchy delineating degrees of attainment of that ideal, with procreating heterosexuals at the bottom of the order. In this hierarchy, dispaired twins have a natural advantage, homosexuals are closer than heterosexuals to the geminate ideal, and one homosexual priest even succeeds in attaining a kind of geminate harmony.

a)Dispaired Twins

After their separation, Jean and Paul are distinguished from non-twin individuals by what Paul terms their "dispaired vision"; while, on the one hand, the non-twin individual cannot see beyond the limited world of his own birth and death, on the other hand, "geminate vision" encompasses an eternal harmony. The "dispaired vision" of each twin represents one of the two "currents" that have been in contradiction "depuis l'aube la plus lointaine de l'humanité occidentale," two currents "dominés l'un par Parménide d'Élée, l'autre par Héraclite d'Éphèse." As the twins mature, their respective halves of the

geminate cell take on sharper definition, until finally Jean finds "le jeu de Bep" intolerable. Tournier carefully elaborates on the distinctions in the novel's first half, setting up the conflict between the two halves which Paul will encounter in his voyage in the second half of the novel. By taking a close look at the growing dissent between the twins through their childhood, we can see how Tournier establishes the basic theme that will be developed through Paul's encounters in his voyage of initiation.

Jean's break with the geminate cell is presaged symbolically by an incident in the twins' eighth year, which Paul refers to as "le baptême forain." The occasion is a traveling fair, which in itself symbolizes the plight of the twins in the world:

> [Les baptêmes forains] représentent avec un paroxysme de violence, la séparation. . .. D'un côté, la foule anonyme, perdue dans une obscurité glapissante, où chacun se sent d'autant plus conforme à l'ordinaire. De l'autre, hissés sur des podiums, arrosés de lumières crues, ceux que l'on montre, les monstres, figés dans leur solitude et leur tristesse, qu'il s'agisse de la petite danseuse aux cuisses marbrées de froid sous son tutu fané, ou du nègre boxeur aux bras et au mufle de gorille. . ..(LM,188)

The specific event involves a ride at the fair--designated ROTOR--in which participants are held to the exterior wall of a huge cylinder by centrifugal force while the floor drops from beneath them. Jean enters the cylinder, and

while all are glued to its wall, he is pried free by a muscular man of almost monstrous proportions. This man, from Paul's viewpoint, "porte à son comble la solitude, la singularité, la sujétion totale et sans merci à un destin, bref, tout ce qui nous est contraire, tout ce qui contredit l'essence de la gémellité"(LM,195).[1] Jean's separation from the wall of the cylinder is symbolic of his later rupture from the geminate cell.

There are several minor incidents in the following years that provide further foreshadowings of Jean's dissent, including: "l'affaire du triple miroir," in which Jean faints before a mirror, unable to distinguish his own reflection from the image of his brother; the identity card episode, wherein Jean is frustrated by his inability to distinguish between photographs of himself and those of Paul; and the shopping trip to Paris when, after insisting that they split up to buy their clothes separately, Jean is horrified to find that he and Paul return home with identical wardrobes. These are all innocent encounters, though, in which Jean plays only a passive role. His first real initiative in breaking free of his twin involves his sexual initiation outside of the geminate cell.

At Les Pierres Sonnantes, there are two sets of machinery: "l'ourdissoir," which entwines separate threads to form whole cloth, and "les cardeurs," which rip apart old mattresses to retrieve their wool or horsehair stuffing. In keeping with his tendency toward fragmentation

rather than unification, Jean identifies more closely with the carding machines, and more particularly, he becomes intimately involved with Denise Malacanthe, "une cardeuse." His sexual encounter with Malacanthe is Jean's first physical break from the geminate cell. Having already begun to feel dissatisfied with the "négation du temps" inherent in "le jeu de Bep"(LM,274), Jean is anxious to join the world of the unknown, and he finds the outlet for his restlessness in sexuality. With extra-geminate sex, Jean believes he has discovered "l'amour de la vie, et que la vie n'est pas une grande armoire campagnarde où sont rangées des piles de draps immaculés et repassés, parfumés par un sachet de lavande"(LM,279). Though non-twin sex is not as fulfilling as geminate sex, Jean finds that "il y a quelque chose, un je-ne-sais-quoi dans les amours sans pareil . . ."(LM,278). It is in search of this "je-ne-sais-quoi" that Jean finally abandons his twin.

The final incident of Jean's dissent, the one that precipitates his departure, is his engagement to Sophie. It is clear from the beginning that the intended marriage has little to do with the traditional notion of mutual love and the desire to build a stable home and family. Paul describes the engagement as "une comédie qui n'a abusé--et pour peu de temps--que la seule Sophie"(LM,265). Even Sophie notices upon first meeting Jean his "zèle communautaire. . . cette ardente volonté d'en être" which she later realizes stems from "la peur secrète de n'en être

pas"(LM,394). Jean's engagement symbolizes his last-ditch attempt to distance himself from the geminate cell without actually abandoning his brother and his home. When the engagement fails, Jean realises that "cette distance ne peut plus être créée et entretenue que par le voyage. . .. Ce qui a échoué dans le temps trouvera une version plus facile dans l'espace"(LM,417).

Hopping from continent to continent in search of exterior liaisons but succeeding only in sowing destruction wherever he touches down, Jean, in his perpetual voyage without a destination, personifies the open-ended lawlessness of the exterior world. His vision of the world is symbolized by his affinity with "les météores," for which he has a very specific definition:

> . . . pas comme on le croit communément une pierre tombée du ciel--ce qui s'appelle un météorite--mais tout phénomène ayant lieu dans l'atmosphère, grêle, brouillard, neige, aurore boréale, et dont la météorologie est la science(LM,400).

Launched out of the timeless world of geminate unity, Jean finds his own way of coming to grips with the passage of time in the exterior world: rejecting the abstract perfection of the twelve-month calendar, he devises his own "concrete calendar" based on the violent, unpredictable seasons: "Ainsi s'efforçait-il . .. de rejeter les cadres abstraits du calendrier pour vivre au contact de ce qu'il y a de plus coloré et de plus concret dans les saisons"

(LM,399).

Jean is perfectly conscious of the dichotomy distinguishing the sedentary person who lives according to the abstract perfection of calendars and clocks from the active person who leads a capricious life based on the irregularity of meteorological phenomena. He finds the personification of these two types in Jules Verne's Around the World in Eighty Days, and the parallel between Phileas Fogg and Passepartout on the one hand, and Paul and Jean on the other, is obvious:

> Phileas Fogg n'a jamais voyagé . . . . C'est le type du sédentaire, casanier, et même maniaque. Il a pourtant une connaissance de toute la terre, mais d'un genre particulier: par les annuaires, horaires et almanachs du monde entier qui'il connaît par coeur. . . . Il a la religion de l'exactitude. À l'inverse, son domestique Passepartout est un nomade invétéré qui a fait tous les métiers . . . . (LM,400-01)

It is clear which type Jean identifies with: by breaking with the ordered, sedentary world of geminate harmony in order to follow the winds and tides in search of his "je-ne-sais-quoi," Jean is following the model of "l'homme de la météorologie."

For Jean, space is merely a medium through which he travels. He is unable to anchor himself, and finds happiness only in the act of traveling. One such moment occurs during his crossing to Tunisia with Ralph and

Deborah. With no temporal or spatial referents, Jean feels as though he has found "le voyage absolu"(468). His whole life becomes voyaging, but with no Phileas Fogg to plot a course, voyaging itself is his only goal.

Whereas Jean's "dispaired vision" develops gradually with his growing dissent during the twins' adolescence, Paul's loss of the "geminate vision" comes quite suddenly. The world looks different to him immediately after Jean's departure, as he discovers upon realizing that he now sees, for the first time in twenty-five years of living at the seaside, the immense waves caused by the spring equinox. Fascinated by the contradiction between the calmness of the weather and the cataclysmic power of the tides, he finds the term "la tempête calme" to describe the awesome power of the ocean, which had previously been invisible to him. What Paul now sees when he looks out at the world is the calm yet devastating power of the tides, a power which is controled by the unvarying, mathematical cycle of the heavenly bodies in motion.

Paul has a theory that the non-twin has a limited "personal space," which each individual has a greater or lesser capacity to expand. He uses the example of a person in a house to illustrate his theory: if left alone in a large house, the non-twin individual would have to leave a greater or lesser portion of that house unoccupied. Twins, on the other hand (according to Paul's theory), have an unlimited "personal space"; like a gas, the personal space

of a twin will expand to fill any container, no matter how large. Jean's departure precipitates a further refinement of his theory: Paul reflects that when a non-twin individual wants to examine his ideas, his feelings or emotions, he looks inward, toward his own personal world; when a twin examines his soul, he looks outward, toward his other half. The difference between the non-twin and the dispaired twin, according to Paul, is that the soul of the non-twin is inward-directed, and finite, while the soul of the twin knows no physical bounds.

Paul's first reaction to Jean's departure is to closet himself away in La Cassine and forget about his renegade brother, but he soon finds the pain of separation, the "horrible amputation," unbearable. Despite his natural preference for immobility, Paul must admit that the "équilibre immobile (qui) est l'état naturel de la cellule gémellaire"(LM,440) is now broken. Paul will know no peace until "l'identité éternelle, immobile, inaltérable qui est notre statut originel"(LM,442) is restored; seeing no other alternative, he reluctantly sets out into the outside world in search of Jean. It is in the course of his adventures that Paul finds the basic theme of man's split nature--of endogamy vs. exogamy, or Parmenides vs. Heraclitus--reinforced in varying degrees. Each of the individuals he encounters represents a variation of the theme.

b) Non-Twin Individuals

Edouard, the twins' father, represents the weakest of all possible solutions to the individual's quest for harmony--traditional marriage. Edouard has an innate respect for order--not the geometric order that maintains the ideal world of timeless unity, but synthetic order that sustains a society of non-twin individuals. He is driven by two needs: "la soif de tendresse et la faim sexuelle," and when he reaches adulthood, the dictates of social order tell him that he will find satisfaction in marriage. Edouard and Maria-Barbara do indeed appear to be "the perfect couple," but after just a fleeting glimpse of timeless perfection on their honeymoon, the couple falls into the dialectic of time, and Edouard's destruction is as steady and predictable as the passage of months and years.

Edouard and Maria-Barbara seem so perfectly suited to one another that guests at their wedding comment that the two could pass for brother and sister. The implications of their resemblance do not escape the bride and groom:

> Cette fraternité incorporelle, ils la sentaient planer sur leur union comme un idéal, peser sur elle comme une obligation, et si elle était un gage de fidélité et d'éternelle jeunesse, elle impliquait aussi l'immobilité, l'équilibre parfait, la stérilité. Et c'est ainsi qu'ils avaient passé leur nuit de noces sans bouger, glissant dans le sommeil côte à côte, la main dans la main. (LM,316)

During their honeymoon, Edouard and Maria-Barbara come

across another hint of the perfect fraternal union, but this time with a pressentiment that they themselves will never attain such an ideal. The occasion is a performance of Romeo and Juliet in Verona; the two fictional lovers, like Edouard and Maria-Barbara, are young, in love, and perfecty matched. But unlike the honeymooning newlyweds, Romeo and Juliet will never grow old, and will never have children. The two mythical characters die at the height of their love, and therefore their union remains eternal, sterile, immutable, and absolute.

Edouard's glimpse of perfect unity is indeed short-lived; shortly after their return to La Cassine Maria-Barbara informs him that she is pregnant, and her pregnancies continue in rapid succession for eleven years. With Maria-Barbara's love diverted toward the children, Edouard must turn elsewhere to satisfy his sexual hunger, and he soon begins taking regular trips to Paris, where he visits his mistress, Florence--a nomadic gypsy with no family ties. Edouard is soon torn between his two lives: the happy family life at La Cassine where he finds the tenderness he craves, and the exciting city life in Paris, where Florence satisfies his sexual hunger. The big empty house he keeps in Paris symbolizes Edouard's own predicament: "cette demeure . . . n'était ni la famille bretonne, ni un quelconque aspect de Paris, mais le produit manqué et comme l'enfant mort-né de deux sources vainement mêlées"(LM,27).

With his desire divided between tenderness at La Cassine and sexual fulfilment in Paris, Edouard himself is torn, and vulnerable to time's corrosive power. Edouard thinks he finds a solution to the ever-mounting pressure of his divided life by going to war. In fact, this last-ditch attempt to avoid his continuing descent into old age by dying on the battlefield has just the opposite effect; it only precipitates his living decay. The possibility of reuniting the two sides of his desire in the person of Angelica, his war-time mistress, is destroyed when she is killed in an air raid, and far from finding relief in death, Edouard is taken prisoner and sent to a camp, where a few months later he is among the very few who are released "pour raison d'âge ou de santé"(LM,327). Edouard returns to La Cassine, where he dies, almost blind, in May 1948.

Edouard ignores the pressentiment offered by the comparison of the timeless, immutable love of Romeo and Juliet and his own marriage to Maria-Barbara, and wanders helplessly into the dialectic of reproduction and degeneration. Ralph and Deborah, on the other hand, the couple who attempt to defy the dialectic of time by constructing a synthetic, self-contained habitat on the island of Djerba, represent an attempt to defy the fate of non-twin lovers in the real world: they defy the dialectic by remaining sterile, and they attempt to shelter themselves from exterior forces by constructing their own

artificial environment. Though Ralph and Deborah may be less naive than Edouard, they are no closer to the ideal unity of twinship because, as Paul explains,

> un couple sans-pareil, voué à la dialectique, ne peut sans imposture s'enfermer dans une cellule et défier le temps et la société . . . Ralph et Deborah ont usurpé une condition qui est le privilège de frères-pareils (LM,483).

The flaw in Ralph and Deborah's scheme lies in the artificiality of their construction. Unlike the ideal couple, who simply appear in their timeless environment (Jean and Paul born into "la cellule gémellaire," or Romeo and Juliet who have no existence prior to the drama that unfolds in Verona), Ralph and Deborah must laboriously construct their private environment pebble by pebble, and anything built in time must fall in time. Paul explains:

> C'est une cellule matérialisée, géographiquement située, qui est sa propre et longue histoire parce que chacun de ses reliefs, de ses creux et de ses sillons, est la création d'un événement passé et qui pèse incomparablement plus lourd que le réseau invisible et rituel que les frères-pareils tissent entre eux. (LM,487)

Just as Deborah must succumb to ageing and death, the desert oasis is vulnerable to exterior forces; when Deborah dies, their sanctuary is swept away by a violent storm.

Heterosexual couples illustrate the most common yet the most futile approach to reconciling the conflict

between man's innate need for stability and the divisive forces of the exterior world. The twins' uncle, Alexandre, takes the quest for an equilibrium between endogamy and exogamy a step further: he accepts the futility of any attempt to establish a timeless bond between non-twins, and instead looks for whatever fleeting peace he can find in temporary bonding with other non-twins. These temporary homosexual couples prove to be very close to the unity of the geminate cell, but because the individuals are not the mirror image of one another, their union is unbalanced and quickly falls prey to the corrosive power of time.

Though, by Tournier's own account, Alexandre is a secondary character, he plays a prominent role in Les Météores, both structurally and thematically. Structurally, nearly half of the novel is devoted to Alexandre, and thematically, it is Alexandre who defines the central paradox that all of the characters in Les Météores are grappling with. Sedentary by nature, Alexandre is propelled by his own sexual desire into the exterior world, where he is eventually destroyed. Alexandre's heightened sexuality is in fact the key to understanding the novel's central theme; his observation that sex is the centrifugal force that pushes one outside applies not only to himself but also to the dissolution of Jean-Paul's geminate cell. Alexandre is a secondary character because he only recognizes the problem; Paul is the central character because he finds the solution.

Homosexuality is at least a partial solution to the paradox. It has one advantage over heterosexuality in that it is sterile and therefore immune to the dialectic of reproduction: "jetant ma semence aux garçons," Alexandre comments, "je suis voué aux gestes stériles, à un aujourd'hui sans hier ni lendemain, à un éternel présent désertique et sans saisons"(LM,235). For Alexandre, homosexuality is not--as some people believe--a form of mutual masturbation, but is an outward offering of one's self to another. During his years at the Collège du Thabor he encounters one form of inward-directed sexuality --one of the boys in his group invents a form of orgasm without ejaculation; Alexandre rejects this "coup sec" as "une sorte de circuit fermé qui me paraît impliquer le refus d'autrui"(LM,49). Alexandre's sexual desire carries with it a need for contact with an outsider; again referring to "le coup sec," Alexandre says that he is "trop instinctivement chasseur pour [s]'enfermer ainsi en (lui)-même"(LM,49).

Alexandre's life alternates between seclusion and "la chasse." He differentiates his quest for a sexual partner from that of the typical heterosexual by defining two opposing sexual imperatives: endogamy and exogamy. Endogamy describes the injunction to keep one's sexual quest within the bounds of one's own social rank, the unwritten law that one must not take one's spouse from outside one's own class, religion, or nationality. Exogamy describes the

imperative to "bring new blood into the family," an extension of the traditional restriction against incest. Under this scheme, heterosexuals are torn between the two opposing imperatives, and therefore confine their sexual quest to a "safe" neutral zone, not too close to their own family, yet not beyond the perimeters of the safe, the known.

Alexandre is clearly exogamous; he takes his sexual partners from anywhere and everywhere--from a worker at the Roanne garbage dump to a zookeeper in Paris. Alexandre's sexuality completely ignores the "safe" zone of compromise between endogamy and exogamy: he takes his partners from the wild unknown, and brings them into his own world. There, for a brief moment, he and his partner approach the perfection of geminate unity.

Alexandre discovers, too, the universal truth expressed earlier by Paul: the perfect state of harmony is in the womb with one's identical twin. He has always considered his bed a pseudo-womb, and sleep a return to the fetal state; with Daniel, his lover, he gets the idea of sharing that peaceful state of "unbirth" by fashioning Daniel into his own mirror image: "Daniel sera un dandy comme moi . . . comme moi? Pourquoi pas <u>exactement</u> comme moi? Ma copie conforme?"(<u>LM</u>,247) Homosexuals can imitate the geminate cell because, unlike "l'enfer hétérosexuel, où chacun est <u>terra incognita</u>, pour l'autre," homosexual lovers can achieve "l'état d'équilibre aérien du couple

identitaire" through their physical resemblance.

Alexandre actually succeeds in attaining that perfect state: Daniel is his mirror image; the two assume the double-fetus position at night; and they even speak the same secret, universal language (LM,297). So the homosexual couple takes the universal quest one step further; unlike Ralph and Deborah, Alexandre and Daniel attain unity in a pseudo-womb unencumbered by any physical construction. But there is a flaw in their union: unlike Jean and Paul, whose spiritual union encompasses a perfect balance of interior and exterior values, Alexandre and Daniel are strangers and can attain no such spiritual symmetry. That their union is only physical is symbolized by Daniel's death: their union is destroyed when Daniel is devoured by rats, the vermin of the physical world.

Alexandre's quest is not finished with his near-attainment of perfect harmony with Daniel; he finally unlocks the answer to man's paradox when he runs across Jean and Paul (without recognizing them as his nephews) in Casablanca. He feels a strong attraction to the slight, light-skinned youth who appears to be everywhere at once. Following him to the beach, Alexandre finally discovers that the one is in fact two; that his attraction was more than just sexual. He realizes that the single boy he had been following was but one half of a whole: "il existe à côté de lui un vide, un puissant appel d'être." Alexandre feels an irresistible desire to fill that void, but finally realizes that the position is reserved for an identical

twin. He glimpses perfection, yet he is unable to intrude on the geminate unity: "ces enfants n'ont pas besoin de moi," he realizes, "ils n'ont besoin de personne"(LM,385). It is the single boy's apparent ubiquity that first attracts Alexandre: "je suis amoureux de cette ubiquité!" he exclaims at the outset of what is to prove to be his final "chasse." When he finally hits upon the answer, that "ubiquité=gémellité," Alexandre's life-long quest ends in futility: he dies on the day of that revelation.

The conclusion to be drawn from Alexandre's tragic life is that the homosexual is the dispaired twin aware of his missing half. He is timeless and sterile, but is forced into eternal wandering. Alexandre's observation that the single phrase "je cherche quelqu'un" is the eternal truth (LM,378) applies not only to himself, but to all individuals in the world of Les Météores.

We have seen the various ways described in Les Météores of dealing with man's paradoxical existence through variations on inter-personal bonds, or couples; there remain to be discussed only the aberrations, the individuals who deal with the eternal conflict of endogamy versus exogamy by themselves. One of these anomalies is Franz, who, among the patients at St. Brigitte's, is particularly close to the twins: "on les voyait parfois réunis tous les trois dans de mystérieux conciliabules . . . . Seul Jean-Paul détenait la clé du labyrinthe Franz" LM,70). Jean and Paul understand Franz because Franz is an

aberration of the geminate cell: he is the interior, or endogamous, twin with no corresponding exterior twin to balance his existence. Franz constructs an elaborate system for maintaining his seclusion from all exterior forces, but in the end he is unable to overcome the irregularity of the exterior world.

Franz is the epitome of endogamy; for him motion is change, and "ce que Franz haïssait plus que tout au monde, c'était le changement." Franz sees change all around him: "il avait très vite compris que les hommes et les femmes sont d'incorrigibles agités, toujours remuant, bouleversant, courant, exigeant à tout moment des réponses nouvelles les uns des autres" (LM,71). His response to the changing world around him is to refuse to interact with others, to refuse to move from St. Brigitte's. But the world continues to change around Franz. Time itself is a never-ending succession of change; the fading evening light, and the moving clouds, are unbearable to Franz. He manages to conquer time by envisioning a huge calendar that encompasses all of time, thereby reducing the never-ending succession of days, months and years to a predictable mathematical abstraction.

The final impediment to Franz's total peace is the weather; the changing seasons refuse to follow the predictable logic of his enormous calendar. The only solution is to shut himself out from the exterior world altogether, and he manages to do this by shutting off his

mind and concentrating on the endless repetitive motion of the jacquard, the big piece of machinery at Les Pierres Sonnantes. In its cyclical repetitions, Franz envisions the endless cycle of days and months. At night, Franz has only an imperfect cycle to keep his mind off the world around him. The pattern of lights flashing through his window is imperfect because the three lighthouses in the bay revolve at different speeds; at times the colors in his room coincide in one confused melee, leaving a terrifying blackness, a void, in its wake. It is this void that Franz fears more than anything; he crouches, shivering, his ears cocked for the sound of a raindrop falling or a breeze in the leaves outside. The only solution Franz can see is to gather his courage and abandon the sanctuary of his room, to head for the strongest of the three lighthouses; if he can make it to l'Étendrée, its light will outshine the others, and Franz will be bathed in the perfectly regular cycle of just one lighthouse. This foray into the outside world is the death of Franz; the power of the ocean, "la tempête calme," capsizes his rowboat. Franz's defense against the outside world is described at various times as "une forteresse chronologique," and "une prison intellectuelle"(LM,75, 69); the flaw in his defense is his attempt to deny the other half of existence; no "fortress" can protect an individual from the outside forces of time and space.

In the world of Les Météores, Thomas Koussek is an anomaly; he is the only person to defy the law that a

peaceful life on earth is the privilege of identical twins alone. Not only does Koussek succesfully usurp the privileged position of twinship, he also gives away the solution to the enigma of the dispaired twin, to which Paul's entire voyage of initiation is devoted. There is an explanation for this anomaly, but one must go outside of the novel to find it. Tournier reports in Le Vent Paraclet that his original intention had been to write a novel that would add a religious dimension to celestial phenomena by fusing theology with meteorology. The title of the novel, which he announced shortly after the publication of Le Roi des aulnes, was to be Le Vent Paraclet, and Koussek was to play a major role as the prophet of the Holy Spirit. Tournier explains that the novel in fact developed differently, in a more profane direction. The result is that, thematically, Les Météores has two main characters, one buried in an episode of another minor character's adventures, and the other dominating the last half of the novel.

Unlike the characters discussed so far, Koussek does not represent any generic group in the real world; he does not represent the homosexual in the world, nor even the religious homosexual. He is truly one of a kind, "Le jumeau Absolu, celui dont le pareil ne doit être cherché nulle part ailleurs qu'en Dieu"(LM,152). Koussek was not born into the role; he had to attain it. How he goes about achieving the position sheds further light on the nature of

the world as defined by Tournier in Les Météores, and of the role of twins in it.

Thomas Koussek was a classmate of Alexandre's at the Collège du Thabor; he was in fact the inventor of "le coup sec." His preference for this self-directed form of sexuality sets him apart from the outward-directed sexuality of the world, but "le coup sec" is merely a symptom of his uniqueness; this practice in itself does not provide a solution to the individual's divided existence between interior and exterior worlds. Koussek solves the paradox by finding his twin in Christ, and it is not a spiritual union, as might be expected, but an actual physical union. Alexandre finds Koussek one evening in a store-room, lying beneath a life-sized statue of Christ. Koussek is both copying the position of Christ and practising his "coup sec"; he is copying the physical communion of Jean and Paul in their "cellule gémellaire."

Koussek advances further than either of the twins did in their childhood by going beyond a physical union and attaining true ubiquity by extending his bond with Christ over the entire globe. In order to do this, he has first to accept the death of Christ, thereby becoming a dispaired twin. Then he fills the void in his existence by bonding with the spirit of Christ, which is embodied in the wind. Koussek is thus the only individual to find a solution: he first becomes a twin, then a dispaired twin, then re-establishes his geminate bond with "les météores."

* * *

In Les Météores and The Sot-Weed Factor, Tournier and Barth set up a conlict between immutability and change, between the opposing philosophies of Parmenides and Heraclitus. In Les Météores, the division is represented by the two twins: Jean, by breaking away from the geminate cell, represents the Heraclitean world of change and motion, while Paul's dedication to the geminate cell and all that it implies represents the "Parmenidean" view of an immutable, indivisible world. Ebenezer Cooke's perceived mission of preserving his immutable identity as virgin and poet represents an attempt to defy the flux of the exterior world, as championed by Henry Burlingame.

As the central concern of both novels, the portrayal of this conflict and its resolution will reflect the differing views of the two authors, and (expanding from the level of literal analysis to theoretical interpretation) the resolution of the conflict will reflect the differing views of the two authors regarding the relationships between literature and reality, between man and the world.

IV -- THE QUEST OF THE DISPAIRED TWIN

The central plot of each novel describes the exploits of a dispaired twin in the outside world. Each twin has a lesson to learn, and that lesson constitutes the thematic conclusion of each novel. As an academic, Barth's central concern is with the relationship of literature to reality, while as a philosopher, Tournier is more concerned with the more personal relationship of man to reality. While both concerns are extremely close--the former involving the fiction we record on paper, the latter involving the fiction each individual carries in his own mind--the subtle thematic distinction determines the differing forms of the two quests. In this chapter we shall follow each questing twin through his trials and hardships in the outside world, and shall discover who, in each novel, finally gains the upper hand--Parmenides or Heraclitus.

* * *

i) THE SOT-WEED FACTOR

Ebenezer sets off on his voyage of initiation with a fixed vision of an ordered world and his place in it: he is Ebenezer Cooke, poet and virgin, and the Poseidon is a mighty ship that will carry him to Maryland, his rightful home. At the outset of his journey, these delusions fill Ebenezer's entire field of vision; as he progresses, the

outside world encroaches on this "poetic vision" until finally at his trip's conclusion, Ebenezer's loss of virginity symbolizes the loss of his poetic vision, or delusion.

The first episode of his voyage presages the difficulties that lie ahead, and should warn Ebenezer that his trip will be far from the direct route, "straightway to Malden" that his father had prescribed. His first stop is an afternoon in Plymouth, where, had things gone according to the virgin poet's preconception, he would have simply stopped in at the pub for one last meal ashore, then hired passage to "the mighty Poseidon," and been on his way to Malden. In fact, in those few hours Ebenezer gets caught up in an elaborate succession of mistaken identities and plot twists that leave his private universe severely shaken, albeit still intact. The following point-form summary of the afternoon's events exemplifies the conflict between Ebenezer's ideal and the real world: (See chart, following two pages)

Ebenezer Embarks on his Journey to Malden: an Afternoon at Plymouth

a -- Ebenezer and Burlingame arrive at Plymouth, deposit trunks at dock, enter tavern.

b -- Burlingame decides to pose as Ebenezer's manservant for the duration of the voyage to Maryland, slips away to change clothes.

c -- Meanwhile, Bertrand (Ebenezer's real servant) has come to Plymouth claiming to be Ebenezer Cooke.

d -- Burlingame runs into Bertrand, who is hiding from the pirates in the tavern's stable (the two don't know each other); they switch clothes.

e -- Meanwhile, two pirates have entered the tavern; Ebenezer gets in the middle of a fight between the two, and is about to be shot when the pirates see "The Laureate" (Bertrand, now in Burlingame's clothes) pass by the tavern's entrance; they take off after him.

f -- Ebenezer fouls his pants, faints, is taken out back to the stable.

g -- Burlingame goes to the dock, poses as Captain Coode, leader of the pirates, takes the pirates to a bar to detain them.

h -- Bertrand goes to the dock, claims to be Ebenezer Cooke, takes Ebenezer's trunk, and boards the Poseidon.

i -- Burlingame returns to the dock, claims second trunk as Coode's, leaves instructions to ferry it to the Morpheides.

j -- Ebenezer goes to dock and, posing as servant, convinces dockman that "Coode" was an impostor. Thinking that it was an impostor who claimed Burlingame's trunk, he orders second trunk rerouted to the Poseidon.

k -- The four unite back at the tavern: Burlingame as Coode, Ebenezer as a servant, and two (real) pirates. Burlingame sends the two pirates off, explains the situation to Ebenezer: impostor has boarded the Poseidon with Ebenezer's trunk; Burlingame will sail as Coode on the Morpheides.

l -- Ebenezer returns to dock and, forced to maintain disguise as servant, says he made a mistake, the second trunk really does belong to Coode, and it should be sent to the Morpheides. He boards the Poseidon alone, without baggage.

Ebenezer has already suffered a major setback in the temporary loss of his identity as Ebenezer Cooke, poet laureate of Maryland. Having grudgingly relinquished his title during the luggage mix-up, he swore "never to betray [himself] again"(SWF,205). Determined to return the world to its rightful order, he proudly proclaims to the captain upon boarding the Poseidon that he is "Ebenezer Cooke, Poet and Laureate of the Province of Maryland"(SWF,209). The outside world does not conform so easily to Ebenezer's vision of it, though; the captain responds by ordering his crew to "test whether he can swim as grandly as he lies . . .. Throw the wretch o'er the side, boys"(209). Ebenezer has no choice: to save his own life he must continue to pose as Bertrand, the poet's servant, for the duration of the voyage while the real Bertrand parades about as Poet Laureate. Though Ebenezer swears that "'tis the last time I'll be any man whate'er save Eben Cooke"(SWF,226), he in fact spends most of the rest of his eleven-month journey trying to regain that title.

Though he has already lost his identity by the time he boards the Poseidon, his poetic vision is slow to give way to the pressures of the outside world. Even with the decaying hull of the Poseidon before his eyes, Ebenezer continues his delusion of "a noble ship. . ./Akin to those that Homer's Greeks sail'd East to Troy"(SWF,192-93):

> To the seasoned eye her frayed
> halyards, ill-tarred shrouds, rusty

> chain plates, "Irish pennants," and
> general slovenliness bespoke old age
> and careless usage. But to Ebenezer she
> far outshone her neighbours.
> 'Majestic! he exclaimed. . . (SWF,208)

His poetic vision suffers a minor setback when he cannot help but acknowledge the discrepancy between the foods of the gods he had envisioned and the sea biscuit and salt pork that every passenger is rationed. Ebenezer admits that "[r]eality had failed to live up to his expectations" (SWF,231), but merely accepts this minor adjustment in his world view, and continues undaunted.

Finally, after several weeks of confinement to the crew's quarters, we are told that Ebenezer "could entertain no more illusions about the ship's magnificence"(SWF,250). Though reluctant to abandon this sizeable chunk of his imagined world, Ebenezer accepts the setback, and compensates by magnifying the only remaining part of his delusion vis a vis "the mighty Poseidon": "his admiration for the sailors increased ten-fold"(SWF,250). But even this delusion gives way to the contradictory real world: upon awakening from a three-day swoon (with "pains in his buttocks"(SWF,249)), Ebenezer finds that these friendly sailors are intent on initiating him to "the code of the sea." Bent spread-eagle over a table, pants at his ankles and face pushed firmly into a pillow, Ebenezer is on the verge of being "inducted" when a commotion above-decks signals a pirate attack and Ebenezer is saved from being gang-raped. Ebenezer's world view has suffered yet another

setback; just before being taken prisoner by the pirates, he invents a fitting couplet:

> Hell hath no fouler, filthier Demon;
> Preserve me, LORD, from English
> Seamen!(SWF,255)

With his illusion of the grand life of the sea-voyaging hero shattered after the humiliation of the Poseidon and another two and a half months' captivity aboard a pirate shallop, Ebenezer still refuses to admit the futility of his determination to "see the world for what it is"(SWF,433). Upon landing in Maryland, his private universe is as intact as ever when he declares: "Smile, ye gracious hills and sunlit trees! . . . thine own sweet singer, thy Laureate, is come to noise thy glory!" (SWF,319). Three weeks later, Ebenezer awakens from a swoon to find himself an indentured servant on his own estate, married to the plantation owner's pox-ridden, swine-herding harlot of a daughter. At last he admits that the world may not be as he thought it to be: the Poseidon turned out to be a rotting tub, its crew lecherous sodomites; in Maryland he finds "naught but scoundrels and perverts, hovels and brothels, corruption and poltroonery"(SWF,493). He has lost his original vision, only to replace it with another, no less subjective and inflexible. Maintaining his perception of himself as the virgin poet, he sees his mission now as to describe the "real world" which he has found to be the antithesis of the Maryland he had envisioned:

> He would versify his voyage to Maryland from beginning to end, as he had planned before, but so far from writing a panegyric, he would scourge the Province with the lash of Hudibrastic as a harlot is scourged at the public post, catalogue her every wickedness and expose her every trap laid for the unwary, the innocent! (SWF,494)

His three months at Malden, during which he composes his "Marylandiad," mark a turning point in Ebenezer's quest. His interior world has been turned upside down, but still Ebenezer refuses to admit the irreconcilable opposition between his own "pointed order" and the fluctuating chaos of the outside world. Though hardly innocent (he has been sodomized and he himself has nearly committed rape twice), he is still technically a virgin, and though his poetic vision has come under severe atack, he still believes that he is a poet. By fleeing Malden, Ebenezer is deserting his wife and leaving the family plantation in the hands of a band of opium dealers who are plotting the overthrow of the government. What is more, he learns that Anna has sailed to Maryland in search of him, and that Andrew Cooke is also on his way. Ebenezer is exhausted and at least partially disillusioned, but his quest is not complete: he must now regain the estate he has handed over to a band of criminals; he must somehow reconcile his marriage to Joan Toast, and he must find his sister.

The second half of Ebenezer's quest is marked by a series of revelations, which finally lead to the

abandonment of the innocence and poetry upon which his private world is based. Ironically, Ebenezer himself likens his entire journey so far to a dream: recalling the night of the "momentous wager" in Lockett's pub, Ebenezer remembers that he had been asleep at his desk when Joan's knock on his door had awakened him:

> All my joys and tribulations commenced with that knock on the door, and so fantastical are they, I wonder if I am not still in Pudding Lane, still wrapped in sleep, and all this parlous history but a dream (SWF,556).

He fails to see that he has hit upon the solution to his problems: that his entire quest is motivated by a waking dream, and the world in which he thinks he is living exists only in the mind of Ebenezer Cooke. However, circumstances do not allow him to dwell on this insight; having nearly grasped the solution to his dilemma in the real world, Ebenezer must let it slip away when a gale blows the ship, aboard which he is fleeing from Malden, into uncharted territory. The revelation is not, however, entirely lost; it returns to Ebenezer's subconscious, whence it boils up to the surface piecemeal in minor revelations along the last leg of his journey.

The first of his delusions to be lost is his vision of an ordered, static world. When Ebenezer hears the tale of Billy Rumbly, and how Rumbly apparently abducted The Church Creek Virgin and is now holding her captive in his cabin,

Ebenezer launches into his favourite subject, the injustice of a barbaric legal system that not only condoned an innocent man's loss of his family estate to a gang of conspirators, but now apparently allows a brutal kidnapping to go unchallenged. When Harvey Russecks suggests that perhaps Ebenezer is wrong to cling to the rigid definition of justice as spelled out in the courts of London, that a savage land may require a new definition of justice, the proverbial scales fall from Ebenezer's eyes:

> Ebenezer's cheeks tingled, not alone because he felt that he had in fact overstated his indictment: . . . his wholesale rancor had got to be something of a disposition, and he had been alarmed to recognize, as the trapper spoke, that he fell into it of late, on mention of certain subjects, more from habit than from honest wrath. So grossly had Maryland used him, he had vowed to smirch her name in verse to his children's children's children; could such outrages dwindle to the like of actors' cues? It was by no progress of reason that he reached this question, but by a kind of insight that glowed in his mind as the blush glowed in his face. (SWF,655)

This revelation does not just chip away a little piece of his interior universe, to be replaced by a new delusion, but it questions the very nature of his interior world which is shown to be the product of a particular habit or convention of vision. Ebenezer's conception of a static, unchanging world is laid to rest for good with his subsequent revelation that "[t]ime passes for the living,

and alters things. . . . Only for the dead do circumstances never change"(SWF,655).

But this is only half the answer to Ebenezer's moral predicament; having lost his ordered "poetic vision," he still clings to his virginity. Having found one half of the solution to his spiritual quest, he still has to complete his physical quest; he must regain Malden. He must also sort out the predicament concerning the two women in his life--his wife Joan, and his sister Anna.

Ebenezer's interior universe finally crumbles when he realizes that his worship of innocence has no justification in the real world. This ultimate revelation comes when he is tempted by the sexual allure of Roxanne Russecks; he resists the temptation, but looking back at how little the prospect of losing his virginity had moved him, he realizes that "he still sang its praises from witless force of habit," but no longer felt the accompanying moral conviction. This insight at last allows Ebenezer to put his entire Quixotic quest in perspective:

> My brave assault on Maryland--this knight-errantry of Innocence and Art--sure, I see now 'twas an edifice raised not e'en on sand, but on the black and vasty Zephyrs of the Pit . . ..'Tis no mere castle in the air, but a temple of the mind . . . where the intellect seeks refuge from Furies more terrific than e'er beset Orestes.(SWF,680)

It is at this precise point that Ebenezer's interior world finally capitulates before the onslaughts of reality,

but his quest is still not complete; now a mere mortal among men in the "shifting lights" of the real world, Ebenezer is still a virgin, whether by virtue or apathy, and he still has to regain Malden. Ebenezer realizes that his personal quest will be complete only when he loses his virginity, thereby completing his integration with the exterior world, but this does not drive him to fornicate willy nilly with the closest available woman: "since I must lose it, I'll not abandon it by the way, but surrender it with honor in the field"(SWF,681).

Only three days later, he returns to Malden, where in the novel's closing scene he is reunited with Burlingame, Anna, Joan, his father, Bertrand and others. In the novel's cleverly constructed denouement, Ebenezer loses his virginity and regains Malden at the same time by consummating his marriage to Joan. This is not the end of the novel, though; Burlingame and Joan Toast complete their function as surrogates when Ebenezer and Anna lose their virginity to Joan and Burlingame respectively. Thus their geminate seclusion is finally brought to a decisive conclusion. The twins lose their virginity--not to each other, but to outsiders--and the result is a child. Joan and her infant die, and Burlingame disappears into the bush, leaving Ebenezer and Anna to raise Anna's child together.

The union prophesied by Burlingame thus comes true: Anna and Ebenezer are united in the real world. Ebenezer

has lost his one-sided view of reality, and has accepted his complete integration with the outside world. The story of Ebenezer's quest is the story of a descent from the ideal to the real.

Through the exaggerated plot complications of The Sot-Weed Factor, Barth ridicules the antiquated form of such eighteenth century novels as Fielding's Tom Jones. But The Sot-Weed Factor is more than a superficial comment on the obsolescence of an antiquated form; the obsolescence of another literary form is represented on a thematic level by Ebenezer's quest; by chronicling the gradual loss of Ebenezer's vision of an ordered world, Barth is also illustrating the death of realism, with Ebenezer representing the realist author who attempts to impose his own perception of a static world upon a constantly fluctuating "real" world. Whereas the artless authors whom Barth criticizes in "The Literature of Exhaustion" could only comment on "the fact of aesthetic ultimacy," decrying the death of the novel, Barth fulfills his own mandate to "illustrate in a simple way the difference between the fact of aesthetic ultimacies and their artistic use."[1] By incorporating these "aesthetic ultimacies" into his novel, Barth paradoxically both illustrates the death of the novel and denies it at the same time.

ii)LES MÉTÉORES

Isolating the central quest in Les Météores is not quite so clear-cut as it is in The Sot-Weed Factor. Of the half-dozen or so characters embarked on various quests (both geographic and spiritual), it would appear at first glance that Alexandre's quest forms the novel's central plot. The first two-thirds of the novel are centered around the inception of Alexandre's quest, its progress, and its conclusion; two hundred and seventeen pages in all are devoted to Alexandre's first-person narration. Paul's quest, on the other hand, does not begin until the end of chapter XIV, and his narration takes one hundred and eighty-nine pages. Nevertheless, by Tournier's own account, Alexandre is a minor character[2], and since the last third of the novel is devoted to an almost uninterrupted narration of Paul's quest (Alexandre's story is broken up by several chapters describing other characters) and the novel ends with the conclusion of that quest, it would seem safe to assert that Paul's quest is indeed the central theme of the novel.

Paul's quest takes him halfway around the world and back again, and is divided into nine episodes. The order of narration of these nine episodes is straightforward: one need only skim the chapter titles to follow Paul's progress from France, to Tunisia, to Iceland, to Japan, to Vancouver, across the prairies by train to Montreal, from

there to Berlin, and then back home to France. Before I proceed with a more detailed analysis of the way in which Paul's journey unfolds, and the way it is narrated, a basic distinction between the styles of Tournier and Barth must be clarified.

Tournier spent five years researching the subject matter of Les Météores, but unlike Barth, he devoted most of his studies to the metaphysical implications of twinship, rather than to the worldly physics of time and space, or to history and geography.[3] The two authors' differing approaches are reflected in the forms of the two novels; whereas the predominance of narrated action and direct speech in The Sot-Weed Factor provides a precise account of the characters' movements through time and space, in Les Météores the novel's actions are loosely scattered around philosophical discourses indirectly attributed to the thoughts of one or another of the characters, and as a result there are several unaccounted for gaps in the fictional world of the novel. The paucity of spatio-temporal references in the novel makes it impossible to plot Paul's progress through time and space accurately, but nevertheless, before I discuss the thematic richness of Paul's voyage, I will piece together what clues the text does provide to draw up a brief resume of Paul's physical progress.

The following temporal clues are provided by the text of Les Météores:

-Paul's discovery of "la tempête calme" in April (LM,.420) comes shortly after Jean's departure from La Cassine(LM,433).

-Paul is in Venice three months after Jean's departure from La Cassine (LM,443)--hence, in June--and in Venice Paul is three weeks behind his brother (LM,457).

-Jean was present at Deborah's death in El Kantara (LM,472), but not at her funeral(475); Paul arrives at El Kantara "une quinzaine de jours" after Deborah's funeral (LM,474), and is therefore presumably a little more than fifteen days behind Jean.

-Paul is in Iceland in June(LM,512).

-Paul is one month behind Jean at Nara (LM,530).

-The spatio-temporal gap between the twins is closed when Paul catches a glimpse of Jean in the middle of Canada.

-Paul arrives in Berlin on August 10, 1961 (LM,585).

-Paul's mutilation occurs shortly after attending an underground mass on August 18 (LM,598).

-Paul returns to La Cassine shortly after his mutilation (LM, Chapter XXII).

So Paul leaves in June and arrives back at La Cassine in August. Because the narrated actions account for no more

than a couple of weeks at each of Paul's stopovers, we can assume that the entire voyage took place in the same year--1961. (Though another temporal reference would seem to contradict this assumption--Ralph's reference to his arrival at El Kantara in 1920, "il y a quarante ans,"--it would be more reasonable to assume that Ralph is being less than precise than it would to assume that an entire year goes unaccounted for in the narration of Paul's journey.)

I must stress the importance of the word "assumption"; I can only assume that the temporal gaps in Paul's travel diary cover days, and not weeks or months. Some of the most perplexing gaps occur in Paul's diary entries during his stay in Japan. For example, Paul lands in Tokyo and deplanes; he refers to his "premiers pas dans . . . l'aérogare de Tokyo" (LM,515). The narration is briefly interrupted by a discourse on the Zen interpretation of Japanese gardens, then we return to Paul: he rises at daybreak and walks around "la ville"--Tokyo, we assume. But then on the next page, Paul is suddenly three hundred miles away, at Nara. After another brief discourse attributed to Shonin, this time on the properties of Yin and Yang, Paul's next diary entry begins: "Ce matin à 4 h 25, . . ." The reasonable assumption would be that this is the next morning, that Paul is still at Nara, but now we learn that he is back near Tokyo, at the temple of Kamakura. So we can assume that Paul has been shuttling across Honshu, perhaps taking day-jaunts on the bullet train, but nevertheless the

time between these locations is entirely unaccounted for; for all we know, he may have walked from Tokyo to Nara and back again, spending weeks or even months in Buddhist temples along the way.

Tournier's geographical research was limited to the two weeks he spent in Japan in 1974, his tour of Iceland in 1972, and his train trip across Canada.[4] Tournier admits that two weeks in Japan is "absurdly too short to dare to write anything objective about the country," and he says that he got around the difficulty by adopting the travel diary form, which, as it turns out, he maintained for the entire narration of Paul's trip.[5] This technique may absolve the author of responsibility for factual errors, but the several inaccuracies also reflect the low priority Tournier places on realistic detail (despite, interestingly enough, his insistence that he wants his fiction to have the odor of mushrooms, etc.). Having lived in both places, I know that maple trees do not grow to the shoreline in Stanley Park, and that Calgary is not the capital of Alberta; I am sure that natives of the five other countries Paul visits would find similar factual inaccuracies.

In the two quests narrated in Barth's The Sot-Weed Factor and Tournier's Les Météores, we follow two journeys across the globe, one firmly anchored in a near-duplication of real time and space, the other more metaphysical than geographical. Already we have come across a major difficulty in comparing the two novels: Barth's obsession

with the intricacies of space and time contrast with Tournier's almost nonchalant treatment of the physical and temporal aspects of the quest. As could be expected, this difference is indicative of the difference between the central themes of the two novels. Both novelists are preoccupied with the effects of time upon the individual, but they draw different conclusions, conclusions which are embodied in the themes of their novels. The central theme of both is the relativity of time, but whereas Barth's characters must plunge themselves headfirst into the "Heraclitean flux" if they are to find fulfilment, Tournier's characters attain fulfilment only by transcending time.

As the interior-oriented twin, Paul follows Jean with only one goal in mind: to re-establish the peaceful existence he had known in the co-imagined world of geminate unity. At the outset, his goal is simple: in order to relieve the pain of his "amputation," Paul must find his missing brother. But there is a spiritual side to his quest as well; Paul must discover the place of the dispaired twin in the world before he can find lasting peace. Immediately after Jean's departure, Paul's "dispaired vision" affords him a dim perception of the difference between the dispaired twin and the non-twin; at each stage of his journey he accumulates further insights into the ontological nature of his own peculiar universe--that of the dispaired twin--until finally he discovers his true

relationship to the world, and thereby regains the timeless, sedentary state he had known as a child.

The fundamental distinction between twins and non-twins which Paul discovers upon Jean's departure serves as the formula which his ensuing revelations clarify and refine. His first vague formulation of this essential distinction comes in his comparison of the single twin to a gas that will fill any container it is put in: whereas the "interior world" (Tournier's own terminology--LM,421) of the non-twin is finite, the personal world of the twin is infinitely expandable. Paul uses the metaphor of a person in an empty house: the non-twin would have to leave a portion (greater or lesser, depending on the "range" of his interior world) of the house unoccupied, but the twin's personal presence would fill the entire house, no matter how big. Paul formulates an explanation for this theory when he considers that when a non-twin wishes to reflect on his own feelings, ideas, moods, etc., he looks inward, to find his own personal world; the twin's self-reflection, on the other hand, is outward-directed: he looks out toward his brother to see his own reflection (LM,pp.421-23). The ramifications of this single distinction accumulate until Paul's final revelation provides the clue that closes the circuit; he attains "true ubiquity" by extending his personal world across the entire globe. Before he succeeds in this, he has a few lessons in phenomenology; each of eight geographic stops brings him a step closer to his

spiritual goal.

Venice is the first stop on Paul's journey, and here his perception of the place of the non-twin in the world is clarified, his relationship to Jean comes more clearly into focus, and the scope of his quest is expanded from a simple geographic search to assume cosmic proportions. When Paul first steps off the vaporetto, he is greeted familiarly by a porter, who calls him by name--M.Surin. This one-way recognition is repeated at the hotel, at the glassblower's, in a sidewalk cafe, and in fact throughout the rest of his stay. Paul describes this disconcerting phenomenon as "la lueur aliénante," which he defines as a sort of one-way vision, the ability to see without being seen. This "alienating light" symbolizes Paul's place in the outside world: recognized by everyone yet unable to recognize anyone, he is an alien.

In a Venetian glassblower's shop, the role of the initiating twin is symbolized by a particular type of mirror unique to Venice. This mirror is surrounded by a heavy frame, studded with smaller mirrors, so that one's gaze is constantly distracted away from one's own reflection and toward the outside world. The implied symbolism suggests that as long as Jean's gaze remains on his own reflection--on Paul--he will remain transfixed; once his vision is distracted to the outside world, as it is by his attraction to Sophie, the spell is broken. The glassblower explains the effect of "le miroir centrifuge"

in mythical terms: "Narcisse devenait Ulysse"(LM,432). Thus the ordinary mirror becomes a symbol of endogamy--inward, or self-directed vision--while the Venetian mirror symbolizes exogamy and the quest.

It is in a meteorological station that Paul discovers the vast ramifications of his quest to retrieve the peaceful state of inertia that he knew as a child. Here Paul learns that the heavenly bodies, in their perfect, unchanging orbits, dominate the capricious winds and tides of the world. If he is to retrieve the peace of geminate unity, he must exert that same control over Jean; he must not only find his brother, but also control the capricious elements, "devenir maître de la pluie et du beau temps, . . . le berger des nuages et des vents"(LM,499). If Jean represents the capricious winds and tides, then Paul must exert the power of the heavenly bodies that control them: he must exercise the influence of "la tempête calme" over the capricious movements of his twin.

At the ruins of Ralph and Deborah's man-made oasis-paradise in Djerba, Paul's perception of the privileged place of the twin in the world is confirmed. Ralph and Deborah have failed to "usurp" the position of twins because although they succeed in isolating themselves from the outside world, the very walls that enforce that seclusion bring about their destruction. The collapse of Ralph and Deborah's terrarium habitat symbolizes Paul's analogy of "personal space" and an individual's ability to

expand that space: perhaps realizing the limitations of their vision, Ralph and Deborah attempt to construct a barrier around their limited "space," but whereas a twin's vision is always outward-directed and infinitely expandable, the non-twin individual must eventually collapse under his own ever-shrinking inward-directed universe.

In Iceland, one apparently offhand comment by Olivier concerning his wish to "boucler la boucle"--referring to his tour of the island (LM,508)--represents both Tournier's quest as an author for a closed circuit, and the goal of Paul's quest: his "dispaired vision" must circle the entire globe, coming back to himself. In the closing paragraph of "La Pentecote Islandaise" Paul catches just a glimpse of the solution to his quest. Realizing that his pursuit of Jean around the globe is a sort of "fausse ubiquite," he wonders if there is "une ubiquite vraie"(LM,512). This takes him back to his realization in Venice that simply finding Jean and effecting their reunion will not suffice. In Iceland, Paul realizes that even if he were to "boucler la boucle" by catching up with Jean, a mere geographic circuit around the globe would leave his spiritual quest to retrieve the whole, the unbroken geminate cell, incomplete.

Paul's first observation in Japan is the absence of "la lueur alienante." Even people who have known Jean greet Paul as a unique individual. His lesson in Japan is that

space is not an impartial medium, that it defines the objects it contains. Just as the Japanese can distinguish seemingly identical ceremonial statues by their positions relative to one another, they can distinguish the two twins by the space they occupy. This lesson is reinforced in Vancouver by Urs Kraus, who accounts for the unsettling familiarity of his paintings by explaining that people are defined by the space that contains them. The absence of "la lueur aliénante" in Japan is ascribed to the Japanese perception that motion is change, that movement redefines people. In Vancouver Paul realizes that though following Jean around the globe will never succeed in re-establishing geminate unity, it is a necessary step; Paul must follow in Jean's path in order to undergo the same changes his twin has undergone.

In Le Vent Paraclet, Tournier refers to Berlin as the "absurde et tragique symbole de la coupure par la guerre idéologique entre l'est et l'ouest." He goes on to explain the significance of the Berlin Wall with regard to his novel:

> J'en ai fait sans grande difficulté le point final du grand voyage initiatique des Météores, celui où Paul croit retrouver son frère Jean, et vient y subir les mutilations rituelles qui vont préparer son apothéose météorologique. Le fameux mur dressé entre les deux villes jumelles le 13 août 1961 a trouvé ainsi sa véritable explication: c'est pour séparer mes deux jumeaux et consommer le sacrifice de Paul que Walter Ulbricht l'a

> édifié. Roman apparemment historique Les Météores élève l'événement à la puissance mythologique en effectuant une déduction romanesque de l'histoire.[6]

If the wall represents the divided nature of man, the two halves of geminate unity, the tunnel beneath the wall in which Paul receives his "mutilations rituelles," is also significant symbolically: as Paul comments, "la profondeur . . .était une dimension indispensable à l'achèvement de [son] voyage initiatique"(LM,598).

It is back at La Cassine, where he has weeks to sort out his lessons while he recuperates from the amputation of his entire left side, that Paul finally pieces together the solution. The pain of his amputation reveals to Paul the separation of soul and body, which corresponds to the distinction between the abstract concept of ideal time and the physical reality of space. This distinction reinforces his perception of the two halves of the geminate whole, symbolized by the ideal perfection of the astral bodies and the physical manifestation of their power in the winds and tides. Paul starts experimenting with his pain and the physical sensation of absence. He begins to feel that his wounds are his connection to the entire universe:

> Mes plaies sont l'étroit théâtre dans les limites duquel il m'incombe de reconstruire l'univers. Mes plaies sont deux jardins japonais, et dans cette terre rouge, . . . il m'appartient de

> modeler une minuscule réplique du ciel et de la terre . . . qui me livrera la clé du ciel et de la terre. (LM,608)

Finally, Paul masters his pain, and his missing limbs become metaphysical extensions of himself:

> Ce corps gauche qui remue, qui s'agite, qui pousse des prolongements fabuleux dans ma chambre, dans le jardin, bientôt peut-être sur la mer at au ciel, je le reconnais, c'est Jean, incorporé désormais à son frère-pareil, Jean-le-Fuyard, Jean-le-Nomade, Jean-le-Voyageur-invétéré (LM,618).

Amputation thus becomes Paul's means of achieving "l'âme déployée," which Paul contrasts with the soul of the non-twin individual:

> Une âme déployée. Tel était bien le privilège des frères-pareils . . . . Au lieu que l'âme du sans-pareil se tasse rabougrie dans un coin obscur, pleine de secrets honteux, comme un mouchoir en boule au fond d'une poche. (LM,619).

At last Paul has the knowledge he needs to fulfill his quest. With his discovery that "gémellité=ubiquité" (LM,619), he unites the two halves, time and weather. He finds a permanent union with his missing brother, and establishes the union of the violent weather-time of seasons and storms with the ideal time of the heavenly bodies.

* * *

In both novels, geminate unity represents Parmenides' view of a stable, immutable whole, while the outside world represents the chaos of the Heraclitean flux. Ebenezer ventures out of the stable universe of geminate unity with the mistaken goal of imposing its immutability on the outside world. Paul is reluctantly drawn into the outside world hoping only to re-establish his own immutable universe by reuniting with Jean. Ebenezer learns that neither will the world bend to his ordered vision, nor is it possible to retrieve the security he had once shared with Anna in his childhood. Paul, for his part, learns that regaining geminate stability is not as simple as merely retrieving Jean, that their union only symbolizes a much grander whole: the union of "la tempête calme" and "les météores." Paul eventually tackles the much grander task of uniting himself with the weather and achieves true ubiquity through his "dispaired vision."

Thus on a thematic level, Barth suggests that it is futile to battle the exterior forces of change, that one can find fulfillment only by "going with the flow," or accepting the flux of the universe. Tournier, on the other hand, offers a transcendent vision, suggesting that there is a solution, that it is possible (for twins at least) to transcend the flux and find an eternal universe by uniting weather-time with the immutable time of the planets and stars.

CONCLUSION

From the nihilistic outcry at the death of a genre during the 1950s and '60s there arose a new generation of novelists, among whom Barth and Tournier are leading figures on two continents. With The Sot-Weed Factor and Les Météores, both authors ignored the modernists' contempt for the past, and turned to previous eras in the genre's history: Tournier to the "sérail" of traditional realism, and Barth to the picaresque form of the eighteenth century novel. The two authors do more than merely imitate antiquated forms, however; Barth comments on the "inexhaustibility" of the genre by exploiting the picaresque form to the level of absurdity, and though Tournier begins his novel with a semblance of traditional linear plot development, he goes against tradition by interrupting this horizontal progression at regular intervals to concentrate instead on a vertical layering of themes.

Both authors are critical of the modernists' disregard for traditional form. Tournier refers to the traditional realist form in architectural terms, exclaiming, "cette baraque, j'en ai besoin, moi!"[1] Barth chose to pattern The Sot-Weed Factor after the picaresque novel precisely because of its intricate plot structure. Both authors also recognize the thematic core of the genre in its portrayal of the conflict between man's subjective "self" and the objective world, and both chose to portray this conflict through the quest of a dispaired twin. Both exploit the

genre's traditional thematic and formal properties, but to different ends: Barth uses the questing twin as an allegory for the novelist's literary quest, while Tournier uses Paul to embody his own quest for "un grand système."[2]

Faced with the novelist's dilemma of having to impose some sort of order on an unordered world, Barth found the solution by passing the burden of imposing order to his protagonist, then making the reader accomplice to an elaborate joke at Ebenezer's expense. As "poet laureate," Ebenezer is determined to arrange life into an ordered plot: "that lives are stories he assumed; that stories end, he allowed--how else could one begin another?"(SWF,230). As the literary allegory continues throughout The Sot-Weed Factor, the reader feels secure in his complicity with the author: constantly on the verge of seeing the futility of his quest, Ebenezer again and again fails to see the joke. For example, after three months of captive slavery aboard the Poseidon, Ebenezer allows that "reality had failed to live up to his expectations"(SWF,230), but still he persists in his attempt to order life into a linear plot. Again, after nearly losing his virginity to the woman who had nursed him as a baby, Ebenezer naively laments that life rarely lends itself to the literary constraints of probability: "What a shameless, marvelous dramatist is Life, that daily plots coincidences e'en Chaucer would not dare, and ventures complications too knotty for Boccacce!"(SWF,690). Ebenezer's quest is concluded only

when he relinquishes his title as poet, thereby abandoning his attempt to make order of a random world; after settling down with Anna to raise "'their' son Alexander III" (SWF,817), he "wrote no further verse for thirty-four years"(SWF,815).

At the conclusion of The Sot-Weed Factor, the reader is soundly convinced of the futility of trying to arrange life into any preconceived order; paradoxically, he has had to read over eight hundred pages of perhaps the most elaborately contrived plot ever written in order to reach that conclusion. Barth succeeds in both proving that the novel is an "exhausted" genre and in "replenishing" it at the same time.

While Barth consciously exploits the genre's tendency toward allegory, Tournier adamantly rejects it: "un mythe mort, cela s'appelle une allégorie. La fonction d'un écrivain est d'empêcher les mythes de devenir des allégories."[3] The myth he chooses to "revitalize" in Les Météores is the myth of twins representing man's divided nature. The central theme of Les Météores concerns the conflicting impulses within every individual, which Tournier defines as "endogamy" and "exogamy," and Tournier uses the two twins together--the "home base" of geminate unity--to represent the two halves in harmony, but this geminate unity is only a microcosm of the universal harmony which he finally portrays through Paul's "ubiquity." This "ubiquity" embodies the "closed circuit," the "grand

système" which Tournier strives for in his novels.

All of the characters in Les Météores are in search of such a "système," of an absolute which will protect them from the vicissitudes of time and space. Structurally, Les Météores is divided into two parts: approximately the first two-thirds of the novel describe individuals, and the last one-third is devoted to Paul's journey. This structure deviates from the continuous plot of the traditional novel, and it reflects Tournier's preference for "vertical" thematic development over "horizontal" plot development. Each of the characters described in the first section represent variations on the theme of man's divided self; each is in quest of an absolute, and each quest is incomplete. All of these sub-themes and incomplete quests foreshadow the novel's thematic conclusion, the solution to man's dilemma which Paul alone discovers through his voyage of initiation.

Alexandre recognizes the division of the individual, but is powerless to effect a reunion of the two sides: "je suis trop loin. . . du couple absolu," he laments, "je suis trop instinctivement chasseur"(LM,49).If Alexandre represents the nomadic, "exogamic" side of the individual, then Franz represents the interior, sedentary side. His "system" of numbers and sequences of lights is nearly perfect, but the vagaries of space and time prevent him from attaining the absolute. Thomas Koussek, on the other hand, does attain the absolute, but he is a unique

exception among individuals: "Thomas n'était donc pas un frère jumeau déparié, mais le Jumeau Absolu, celui dont le pareil ne doit être cherché nulle part qu'en Dieu" (LM,152). Selma and Olivier represent the futility of the heterosexual's quest for the absolute, and this futility is represented symbolically by Olivier's inability to complete a tour of Iceland: "c'est devenu une obsession pour moi," he says, "boucler la boucle. Refermer cet anneau brisé par le glacier géant. Alors le charme serait rompu. Selma et moi, nous pourrions nous marier et revenir à Arles"(LM,508-09).

It is in the last third of the novel that all of these sub-themes come together in Paul's voyage. All of his encounters with individuals add to his understanding of the mystery, and he finally pieces all of the clues together with his solution that "gémellité=ubiquité." This simple equation crowns the entire novel as $E=MC^2$ crowns Einstein's physics. As Tournier explains: "It is the entire meaning of the twins' grand voyage."[4]

Thematically, Barth and Tournier reach radically differing conclusions. Both see the world as divided between Parmenides and Heraclitus, with geminate unity representing the ideal, unchanging Parmenidean view, and non-twin individuals and the outside world representing the Heraclitean flux. Barth denies the existence of absolutes, or "felt ultimacies," and Ebenezer's quest is concluded

when he relinquishes his "vain attempt to join the moities." Les Météores, on the other hand, culminates with Paul's attainment of the absolute, his transcendence of time and space through ubiquity.

The literary approaches of John Barth and Michel Tournier arose from a dissatisfaction with prevailing literary trends in the 1950s and '60s. Both chose traditional forms of the novel (relative to the modernist rejection of form), and both chose the traditional quest theme, together with the twin motif. That these two authors could so successfully construct their own "systems" within the traditional framework of the genre is proof that the novel as a genre is limited only by the imagination and the brilliance of novelists.

FOOTNOTES

INTRODUCTION

1 Though Tournier, as we shall see in Chapter I, advocates a return to realism, we shall also see later that his actual writing practice is far from traditional.

2 John Barth, The Sot-Weed Factor (New York: Doubleday and Co, 1960). All references are to the Bantam paperback edition (New York: Bantam Books,10th printing, 1980). Future page references will be provided in parentheses within the text, using the abbreviation SWF.

3 Michel Tournier, Les Météores (Paris: Gallimard, 1975). All references are to the Folio edition (Paris: Editions Folio, 1979). Future page references will be provided in parentheses within the text, using the abbreviation LM.

4 Marthe Robert, The Old and the New: From Don Quixote to Kafka, trans. Carol Cosman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).

5 Robert, p.2

6 Throughout my thesis, I will use the term "dispaired twin" to refer to one twin separated from his brother or sister. This terminology is the only effective way to distinguish the individual twin from a distinct class of individual, which I will refer to as "the non-twin individual."

CHAPTER I

1 Biographical information concerning Barth is drawn from: David Morrell, John Barth, an Introduction (Pennsylvania, The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976).

2 Arthur Cooper, "An In-Depth Interview with John Barth," Harrisburg Patriot, March 30, 1969, p.6. Reprinted in Morrell, p.124.

[3] John Barth, "The Literature of Exhaustion," The Atlantic Monthly, CCXX, No.2, (August, 1976), pp.29-34.

[4] "Exhaustion," p.30.

[5] "Exhaustion," p.30.

[6] "Exhaustion," p.30

[7] "Exhaustion," p.30

[8] "Exhaustion," p.31

[9] Morrell, p.32.

[10] Morrell, p.32.

[11] John Barth, from "Having it Both Ways: a Conversation." Interview with Joe David Bellamy in New American Review, No.15 (1972), p.139.

[12] Russell H. Miller, "The Sot-Weed Factor: A Contemporary Mock-Epic," Critique 8, No.2 (1966), pp.88-100.

[13] Morrell, p.33.

[14] Biographical information concerning Tournier is taken from: Michel Tournier, Le Vent Paraclet (Paris: Gallimard, 1977).

[15] Vent Paraclet, p.155.

[16] Vent Paraclet, p.156.

[17] Vent Paraclet, p.174.

[18] Vent Paraclet, p.175.

19 Vent Paraclet, p.183.

20 Vent Paraclet, p.183.

21 Vent Paraclet, p.184.

22 Vent Paraclet, p.183.

23 Michel Tournier, Vendredi ou la vie sauvage, adapted from Vendredi ou les limbes du Pacifique,(Paris: Flammarion, 1971). Shorter works for children: Amandine ou les deux jardins (Paris: Editions G.P. Rouge et Or, 1977); La Fugue du Petit Poucet (Paris: Editions G.P. Rouge et Or, 1979); Pierrot ou les secrets de la nuit (Paris: Gallimard, 1979); and Barbedor (Paris: Gallimard, Collection Enfantimages, 1980).

24 Vent Paraclet, p.183.

25 Vent Paraclet, pp.125-26.

26 Tournier often expresses his own ideas overtly through the voices of his fictional characters, as indicated by the following examples of correspondances between his non-fiction Vent Paraclet and Les Météores:

VP, pp.256-57: "L'esclave secoue ses chaînes . . . et revendique les méthodes contraceptives, le droit à l'avortement, . . . l'amour ludique. . . ."

LM, p146: "(hétérosexuels) se font bien remarquer avec tout ce bruit de pilule, d'avortement, de divorce . .

VP, p.251: ". . . les couples hétérosexuels plongés dans les vicissitudes de la société et de l'histoire."

LM, p.317: "(Romeo et Juliet) baignent dans un milieu voué à toutes les vicissitudes de la société et de l'histoire."

VP, p.235: "L'être vivant n'est en somme qu'une certaine formule héréditaire livré durant son existence aux caresses et aux agressions du milieu qu'il traverse."

LM., p.573: "Qu'est-ce qu'un être vivant? Un petit bloc d'hérédité déambulant à travers un certain . . .

milieu."

27 Michel Tournier, Le Coq de bruyère, (Paris: Collection Folio, 1980), p.180.

28 Michel Tournier, from "L'Écrivain et la société: Un entretien avec Michel Tournier." Interview with Dr. Escoffier-Lambiotte. Le Monde, No.10479 (October 8, 1978), p.32.

CHAPTER II

1 "La Cassine" is the name of the Surin estate, where Jean and Paul are raised as children. Included on the estate are "Les Pierres Sonnantes," a textile factory owned by Edouard, the twins' father, and St. Brigitte's, an asylum for retarded children.

CHAPTER III

1 The "monster" in question is Abel Tiffauges, the protagonist of Le Roi des aulnes.

CHAPTER IV

1 "Literature of Exhaustion," p.30.

2 Vent Paraclet, p.251.

3 Vent Paraclet, p.244.

4 Vent Paraclet, "Les Météores," pp.231-70.

5 Vent Paraclet, p.258.

CONCLUSION

1 "Je suis un métèque de la littérature," interview with Jacqueline Piatier, Le Monde, No. 10479 (october 8, 1978), p.32.

[2] Tournier explained in an interview that the construction of a philosophical system has been his lifelong goal: "Durant mon adolescence, ma vocation ne faisait pas de doute pour moi: ce serait la philosophie, au sens le plus étroit et classique du mot, étude des grands systèmes et, si j'en avais la force, le talent, le génie, . . .construction d'un grand système." Taken from "Je suis un métèque de la littérature," Le Monde, No.10479 (October 8, 1978), p.32.

[3] "Je suis un métèque. . .," Le Monde, p.32.

[4] Le Vent Paraclet, p.263.

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